IFS Insights
› 1/2014 FEB

Michael Mayer

Trends in U.S. security policy

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ISSN 1894-4795

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SUMMARY

The United States currently stands at a highly significant strategic juncture. Its leaders are contemplating substantial reduction in the U.S. level of involvement in global security affairs and a consolidation of its deployed military assets. The combination of an unsustainable fiscal policy and political gridlock has forced tangible adjustments to U.S. security policy. Recent trends have injected substantial uncertainty surrounding the ability and perhaps even the willingness of the United States to continue along its accustomed path of pre-eminence.

Mayer describes three key factors that influence U.S. security policy formation: evaluation of the strategic landscape, decision-making regarding the nation's defense posture, and the domestic political environment. In order to more fully understand the trajectory of U.S. security policy, the formal policy processes are separated from the substance of those policies. In this way, it should be possible to identify which aspects are temporally dynamic and which are more structural in nature.

Mayer identifies a number of recurring patterns (or trends) which, viewed collectively, suggest the United States may be undergoing a process of strategic adjustment. A greater acceptance of strategic risk regarding unstable regions, reductions to ground forces, growing reliance on unmanned systems, heightened budget pressures, and continued domestic political dysfunction will limit the ability of the U.S. to credibly project power abroad. This could have significant implications for NATO and Norway.

ACRONYMS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
ALTBMD	Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense
BCA	Budget Control Act
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSBA	Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DC	Deputies Committee
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DPG	Defense Planning Guidance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	Global Defense Posture Review
IPC	Interagency Policy Committee
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JROC	Joint Requirements Oversight Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NGIA	National Geospatial Intelligence Agency
NMS	National Military Strategy
NRO	National Reconnaissance Office
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
PC	Principles Committee
POM	Program Objective Memorandum
PPBE	Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SCMR	Strategic Choices in Management Review
SOF	Special Operations Forces
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIA	United States Information Agency

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TRENDS IN U.S. SECURITY POLICY
TOWARDS A MORE INSULAR AMERICA?

The United States now stands at a highly significant strategic juncture. Its leaders are contemplating substantial reductions in the U.S. level of involvement in global security affairs and a consolidation of its deployed military assets. The combination of an unsustainable fiscal policy and political gridlock has forced tangible adjustments to U.S. security policy. Recent trends have injected substantial uncertainty surrounding the ability and perhaps even the willingness of the United States to continue along its usual path of pre-eminence. This lack of clarity comes at a particularly crucial time given an exceptionally dynamic international security environment that includes widespread political instability throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa, fragile transitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the continued expansion of Chinese influence in the Asia Pacific region.

The overall grand strategy of the United States has remained relatively stable since the end of the Cold War, albeit with significant adjustments by each of the past three administrations. This strategic framework of military and economic dominance, or primacy, has been predicated on two key pillars: the lack of a peer competitor in the international system and broad bipartisan domestic support for an active and military-focused security policy. China's emergence as a near-peer competitor in the Asia Pacific challenges the stability of the first pillar while a complex set of domestic factors appear to threaten the second. Foremost among these domestic factors is the strained fiscal environment in the United States that has now halted the growth of the U.S. defense budget after a decade of strong growth fuelled by the global terrorist threat and two overseas conflicts.

The 2012 Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) may, in retrospect, prove to be the watershed document that began to acknowledge that the U.S. global strategic posture required some tough choices. As Professor Colin Dueck testified recently before a Congressional subcommittee:

> The overall trend, which is growing worse, is that we have broad, declared international commitments that are under-resourced militarily. Under such circumstances, fundamentally, only a few basic options exist. Either the country can boost its military capabilities, to match existing commitments, or it can scale back dramatically on existing commitments, to match reduced capabilities. There is of course a third option, which is to claim that we will do more with less, while denying that any real tradeoffs exist. I would call this strategic denial. But this is not a true option. We can do more with more. We can do less with less. But when it comes to national defense, we can't actually do more with less. (Dueck 2013)

Or put more succinctly by Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments: "Strategy is what you need when you don't have any more money" (Economist 2010).

Therefore, the upcoming 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, a strategic planning document produced by the Department of Defense every fourth year, may have particular significance. With the Pentagon's recent completion of the Strategic Choices in Management Review (SCMR), which took a serious look at matching ends with means due to the sequestration budget cuts, it appears that serious adjustments are in the offing. Will they follow the course staked out in the 2012 DPG – scaling back on commitments – and thereby solidify the reduced ambitions in U.S. grand strategy? Or will they modify the DPG and outline a different approach? What will the effect of a new administration in 2016 have on U.S. security policy? What effect will the domestic political situation have?

These questions may be summarized by the following overarching query: *What are the most significant processes in the formulation of U.S. security policy and what trends are most prominent?* The term 'security policy' as used here denotes the broad collection of policies that seek to maintain the safety and security of the United States homeland, its overseas personnel and assets, and its friends and allies around the globe. While a great number of domestic agencies might then be included, this study will focus on those aspects of security policy that have international implications. The use of "security policy" rather than "defense policy" reflects the fact that securing U.S. vital interests also incorporates diplomatic and economic measures, while highlighting the fact that the application of military force is a conscious policy choice.

In order to more fully understand the trajectory of U.S. security policy, this study will attempt to separate the formal processes by which security policy is formed from the substance of those policies. In this way, we should be able to better understand which aspects are temporally dynamic and which are more lasting or structural in nature. In this study, therefore, the elements deemed most decisive for the formulation of policy will be emphasized rather than those factors affecting policy implementation, which can vary substantially.

The identification of trends – defined here as a collection of reoccurring observations suggesting a discernible pattern – is an imprecise business but constitutes an important tool for evaluating not only the current direction of policy and policy formation, but also the prospects for changes to those policies. This study explores trends within three basic components of U.S. security policy: strategic evaluation of the security environment (including threat analysis, policy formulation and crisis response); formulation of defense policies (including force structure, posture and doctrines); and domestic political trends (including the capacity to fund security policies, domestic support for overseas operations and the domestic political environment). For each of these three components, the formal processes will first be discussed before examining the substantive trends for each.

The details of U.S. security policy are in constant flux. One week, the administration may signal a desire to have Egypt's president resign, only in the next week to mention him as a stalwart ally. Assurances to extend diplomatic relations are given and retracted, military assistance is granted then suspended, funding for a specific weapon system is authorized and then removed from the budget. The specifics of security policy are so fluid that any report delving into such details would be rapidly out of date. Identifying trends amounts to an imprecise evaluation of the data points and a judgment as to which are most relevant.

The presentation of the study reflects the relative importance of the factors involved in forming security policy outcomes. The dominant role of the executive branch is first discussed before describing the set of relevant trends. Afterwards, the machinations of the Defense Department are reviewed along with associated trends. Finally, domestic political factors which are less decisive in the short term but have long-term effects, are discussed.

The study therefore proceeds in the following manner. Chapter two provides an overview of the relevant actors for the formulation of security policy, including the president and other relevant entities within the executive branch. The broad freedom of action enjoyed by the president in foreign and security affairs has continued to expand, although the occupant of the Oval Office must contend with a range of structural factors that limit his options. Chapter three discusses the actual processes by which the strategic environment is evaluated, including the role of the National Security Council and the development of strategic documents. This is followed by a substantive discussion of the trends in strategic evaluation in chapter four, highlighting the greater focus on "whole of government" approaches, the continued militarization of U.S. security policy and grand strategic approaches that herald a return to great power balancing and a greater acceptance of strategic risk in ungoverned areas.

Chapter five describes the formal and often highly complex processes for developing defense policies, including aspects of force structure planning, force

posture, military procurement, and force doctrines. In chapter six, a substantive discussion of those elements examines recent trends in each of them, most prominently the rebalancing to the Asia Pacific region, the abandonment of force sizing based on security and stabilization operations, the shift away from counterinsurgency and toward stand-off deterrent postures emphasizing anti-access/area denial challenges and high intensity warfare, and the use of special operations forces and unmanned platforms to contain the threat from global terrorism.

The domestic political environment and how it can affect security policy, along with a substantive discussion of current trends, is reviewed in chapter seven. Of note in this chapter are the worrying patterns of political polarization, Congressional gridlock and economic instability that have now crossed the boundaries from purely domestic concerns to problems with clear strategic implications. In the concluding chapter, a summary of the study's findings will appear, followed by a brief discussion of some of the inherent tensions in U.S. security policy and the implications of the study's findings for the NATO alliance. In short, the foundation has been laid for a more insular America. While it will never be completely isolationist, the United States appears to be on track to have a limited number of options in engaging the global security landscape with the same intensity as it has for the past twenty years. The NATO alliance might consider means by which it can maintain regional stability without an active U.S. role in Europe, and further develop stabilization capabilities to quell unrest on its periphery.

PRINCIPLE ACTORS IN U.S. SECURITY POLICY

Understanding U.S. security policy formation poses a serious analytical challenge due to the highly complex and multifaceted nature of most policy decisions and the utilization of dissimilar decisional processes for the broad spectrum of issues in need of resolution. For certain policies – such as the Obama administration's decision in 2010 to deploy an additional 30,000 American troops in Afghanistan – the process appeared fairly linear with meetings of high-level officials discussing the pros and cons and narrowing the options until the president reached a decision with which he was satisfied. In other cases – such as the steady increase in targeted killings by remotely piloted aircraft – the decision making process was more circular, irregular and compartmentalized. The production of strategic documents such as the National Security Strategy or the Quadrennial Defense Review represents yet another, more bureaucratic, form of decision making with the potential to influence the gradual drift of policy – but it can also be nearly irrelevant for the practical implementation of policy. This chapter provides a general overview of the actors and processes associated with drafting long range strategic plans and the decision making processes often utilized when reacting to specific situations, before examining in the following chapter the set of trends in both the content and processes of national security policy.

In general, a distinction can be drawn between strategic and crisis decision making, whereby the former may be more influenced by bureaucratic dynamics and processes and the latter more focused on the president's principle advisors and the personal inclinations of the president. Regardless of the process, however, a core set of actors are most often involved, which includes the president and his personal advisors, members of the National Security Council (statutory members of the NSC, i.e. the vice president, secretaries of state, defense and energy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the director of national intelligence). Among this group of powerful players, though, the president is by far the most influential and decisive voice in the security

policymaking sphere. These and other actors may influence either the process or its implementation, but are ultimately advisors to the president, and it is he who solicits advice from them before making the final decision. It is worth noting that Congress can play an influential role during the implementation phase, as can public opinion, but each of these is nearly always a reaction to policy decisions that have already been made by the president. Therefore, the aforementioned positions are the primary actors in the development of long range strategic planning and crisis response.

THE PRESIDENT

In the formation of domestic policy, the president must compete with a range of other actors in order to exert influence, including members of Congress, powerful interest groups, media personalities and public opinion. The president's legislative agenda often hinges on and can be waylaid by the vagaries of the domestic electoral cycle. In the realm of domestic policymaking, the president is a powerful actor and the only nationally elected official charged with promoting the interests of the entire nation, but he is only one of many players on the domestic stage. This situation contrasts sharply with the realm of security policy, in which the president has much greater flexibility and influence. Congress has much less power over the formation of security policies, and there are very few foreign and security policy interest groups that exert their power nationally (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee or AIPAC is a notable exception). The general public is not particularly interested in security policy and it rarely becomes a decisive issue at election time. Most domestic actors often react to policies that have already been established and exert their influence to alter these existing policies, but rarely are they actively engaged in shaping administration policy on a security issue prior to its implementation. The president has therefore substantial leeway in the formation of national security policy.

Another important reason for presidential prerogative in this area is the continuous advancement in communications technology that accelerates the speed at which crises form and solutions are found. Satellite communications and secure video teleconferencing have enhanced coordination among allies, just as social media and twenty-four-hour news outlets have quickened the pace at which events unfold, a phenomenon well illustrated by the 2011 Arab Spring. The political pressures to make a decision to react quickly – or perhaps to decide not to act – have intensified over the past two decades. Meanwhile, similar advancements in data gathering technologies have made vast amounts of information available for analysis. As one book notes, "the national security process has become saturated with information, and it is the executive who largely controls the organizations capable of assimilating large volumes of data and the communication channels through which decisions based on that information can be relayed" (Jordan et al. 2009). The accumulation of data can, on the other hand, be a security risk, as recent examples involving Wikileaks and the National Security Agency have illustrated.

The centralization of power and influence infused in the office of the presidency with regard to the formulation of security policy makes for a highly individualistic process in which the personal qualities of the president can be of enormous consequence. Three aspects of presidential character are particularly useful for understanding the ways in which each president approaches the duties of the office: the president's leadership style, his world view, and his ability to coordinate the national security apparatus to achieve coherent policy (Sarkesian et al. 2008: 72).

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Scholar Sam Sarkesian notes that "the way in which a president governs is every bit as important as the inherent power of the office-as-institution" and identifies a number of leadership styles that have characterized past presidents:

> In the magisterial style, the president places himself as the authoritative head of the govern-

> ment. The bureaucratic style is one in which the official leads as the chief bureaucrat, with all the mind-sets and perceptions that that role entails. In the managerial style, the president strives for efficiency in the administration through the close supervision advocated by managerial principles. In the corporate style, the president governs like the chairman of a large business, combining the managerial approach with commitment and loyalty. (Sarkesian et al. 2008: 73)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that President Barack Obama contrasts quite significantly from his predecessor in the way he reaches a decision. As nearly all presidents must, President George W. Bush exuded self-confidence and a strong belief in his ability to make tough decisions, noting that "I just think it's instinctive. I'm not a textbook player. I'm a gut player" (Woodward 2002, 137). Bush approached issues instinctively rather than analytically and relied heavily on his personal religious faith to guide his decision-making process, resulting in an almost unquestioning sense of moral certitude. He oftentimes appeared to exhibit an unwillingness to entertain dissenting opinions, personally delve into the details of a particular policy or engage in lengthy interagency debates over issues (Suskind 2004).

It has been reported, for example, that no meetings were held to discuss the merits of invading Iraq in 2003, and that the policy was instead developed incrementally. Paul Pillar noted "the absence of any identifiable process for making the decision to go to war.... There was no meeting, no policy options paper, no showdown in the Situation Room where the wisdom of going to war was debated or the decision to do so made" (Pillar 2007: 55). Bush's personal decision-making approach appeared to closely resemble Sarkesian's corporate style of leadership. He viewed his role as being at the top of the policymaking structure – less detail-oriented and reflective, but efficient and decisive.

President Obama, on the other hand, has often taken a more active role in policy deliberations and appears to value extended debates over policy options. Numerous journalistic accounts describe an internal decision-making process that revolves heavily around the president himself, who routinely engages on the details and acts as his own "devil's advocate," searching out alternative policy options. Obama's leadership style appears more magisterial in nature, with the president at the center of the policymaking process rather at than the top. His intense involvement may result in more comprehensively vetted policies, but can also be inefficient and less decisive. Some critics contend that Obama too often acts as his own advisor, an impression exacerbated by the constant expressions of awe by the White House staff of the president's analytical powers. Former Bush policy advisor Peter Feaver observes wryly that "Obama does not need a grand strategist like Henry Kissinger as his advisor because, we are told, Obama is his own Kissinger" (Feaver 2010).

In some aspects of presidential decision-making, however, President Obama appears particularly decisive. When confronted with the opportunity to hit bin Laden's suspected compound in Pakistan, Obama chose to proceed with a risky nighttime air assault despite the advice of Secretary Gates and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James Cartwright to opt for a B-2 bomber strike, the intelligence community having emphasized the uncertainty of their information, and the political and strategic risks of "invading" an ally without their knowledge (Sanger 2012a, 88–94).[1] Similarly, Obama's decision to utilize unmanned aerial vehicles for so-called "signature strikes" against suspected terrorists was a calculated strategic and political risk.

The office of the presidency is a lonely one and its occupant oftentimes experiences a feeling of isolation. George Washington once remarked that it was not unlike a "culprit who is going to the place of his execution." Other presidents have referred to the White House as a "prison," as "the loneliest place in the world." The presidency, as Harry Truman put it, was "like riding a tiger. A man has to keep riding or be swallowed" (Sarkesian et al. 2008: 69). In a positively-angled profile written for *Vanity Fair*, author Michael Lewis offers some insights into President Obama's daily routines. After "a quick breakfast and a glance at the newspapers – most of which he's al-

ready read on his iPad – he reviews his daily security briefing. When he first became president he often was surprised by the secret news; now he seldom is" (Lewis 2012). Even Obama's clothing reflects a conscious decision:

> You also need to remove from your life the day-to-day problems that absorb most people for meaningful parts of their day. "You'll see that I wear only gray or blue suits," he said. "I'm trying to pare down decisions. I don't want to make decisions about what I'm eating or wearing. Because I have too many other decisions to make." He mentioned research that shows the simple act of making decisions degrades one's ability to make further decisions. (Lewis 2012)

The bubble of isolation that inevitably surrounds the president can quickly lead to situations in which the full range of options is not presented during policy discussions, political or diplomatic consequences are not fully appreciated, and a White House environment in which interpersonal relationships and bureaucratic infighting have a negative effect on policymaking outcomes. Internal White House policymaking processes are highly personalized and shift with each occupant. By controlling the composition of his White House staff, a president can seek to avoid the worst of these tendencies. Nevertheless, a small group of "gatekeeper" advisors who control access to the president play a particularly influential role in any administration.

WORLD VIEW

Due to the fact that the president wields tremendous personal power in shaping U.S. security policy, the particular world view and assumptions of each individual are particularly relevant, even if it may sometimes be difficult to find tangible evidence of such factors in the policy process. Due to the inherent challenges of obtaining complete information on any number of situations around the globe requiring action and the uncertain future consequences of a particular policy, most decisions ultimately are based on a set of assumptions about, among other things, the root causes of an issue, the desired end state that best serves U.S. interests, and the possible effects of a range of policy options. These assumptions often are based on a certain world view that may, in some instances, approximate a theory of international relations.

During the Cold War, for example, it was generally accepted that the "loss" of one western-oriented state to a communist regime could increase the likelihood that neighboring states in the region would follow suit. This geo-strategically-driven "domino" theory of communist expansion framed U.S. thinking in a number of ways and informed policy decisions. In the current security landscape, similar "framings" might include the potential threat from international terrorism, the implications of China's growing economic and military power, or the consequences of global climate change. Former Under Secretary of State for Policy Michèle Flournoy mused recently that for many current security challenges and the changing nature of warfare, "we really lack a conceptual frame. I like to think we're in a period analogous to, you know, the early nuclear period before Herman Kahn and Tom Schelling ... when we didn't have a conceptual frame for even thinking about this properly" (Flournoy 2012).

President Obama offered voters a comprehensive examination of his world view in April 2007 while campaigning in Illinois. In a speech to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, he argued that in the globalized world of the 21st century, "the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of people" and "America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America" (Obama 2007). Rogue states and terrorist networks pose a constant threat, particularly with the spread of weapons of mass destruction; collective action on this and other global issues such as climate change and poverty will be necessary, but Obama argued that many of these institutions were in need of reform. President Obama's understanding of the world often appears complex and nuanced, for which there are few obvious policy choices except American leadership in cooperation with other nations.

And when, in October 2009, President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, he set his speechwriters Ben Rhodes and Jon Favreau to work drafting an acceptance speech. He directed them to review historic figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, in order to "reconcile" their non-violent principles with the violent world seen by the president on a daily basis. Obama was dissatisfied with the speechwriters' effort, though, and according to Michael Lewis (2012):

> That evening he sat down at his desk in the White House residence, in the Treaty Room, and pulled out a yellow legal pad and a No. 2 pencil ... he didn't toss his speechwriters' work in the garbage can, not right away. Instead he copied it out, their entire 40-minute speech. "It helped organize my thoughts," he says. "What I had to do is describe a notion of a just war. But also acknowledge that the very notion of a just war can lead you into some dark places. And so you can't be complacent in labeling something just. You need to constantly ask yourself questions." ... He finished around five in the morning.... A few hours later he handed his speechwriters six sheets of yellow paper filled with his small, tidy script. In receiving a prize for peace, speaking to an audience primed for pacifism, he'd made the case for war.

ABILITY TO COORDINATE AND MANAGE

The national security apparatus surrounding the president is highly personalized and unique for each occupant of the White House. A staggering number of executive branch positions are filled by presidential nominations and these bureaucrats can have some impact on the formation of long range security policy planning; more often, however, these appointments affect the daily implementation of the administration's policies. Those individuals that most impact the formation of administration policy – and become even more influential during crisis management situations – form the small group of senior advisors that interact with the president on a regular basis. This is particularly so with a presidential leadership model such as the Obama administration's in which the president himself plays an especially active role in the deliberative process.

A presidential candidate often becomes associated with a number of foreign and security policy advisors during the election campaign, a handful of which will eventually follow the candidate into office. Others may be well-established figures in Washington or have been actively recruited by other senior advisors. One advisor, Harvard professor Samantha Power, was invited to dinner by then-Senator Barack Obama after he had read *A Problem from Hell*, her Pulitzer Prize winning account of 20th century genocides. She then spent a year in his Senate office as a foreign policy fellow and served as a policy advisor to his presidential campaign before eventually becoming a senior director of multilateral affairs on the National Security Council staff and ultimately U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (Lizza 2011). The intense pace and workload facing administration officials ensures that some turnover is inevitable, drawing in new personalities and influences. Regardless of the timing and origin of their appointment, however, the group of advisors with which the president has contact on a regular basis has one thing in common: they serve at the pleasure of the president.

This represents one means by which a president can contribute to a smoothly operating national security policy operation. By appointing individuals able to work together in a professional manner and limiting the inevitable personality clashes, bureaucratic infighting and political drama that often arise within an administration, a president improves the quality of advice he receives and the efficacy of his staff. Obama's initial choices for important positions in his administration appeared to be a conscious effort to assemble a "team of rivals" that would offer contrasting views, particularly his Democratic Party rival from the primaries, Hillary Rodham Clinton, as secretary of state, former U.S. Marine Corps Commandant and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) James "Jim" Jones as his national security advisor, and the retention of Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense, a moderate Republican appointed by President Bush.

During Obama's first term, the cooperative atmosphere that arose between Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Defense Gates contributed to a much greater degree of policy consistency and less

internal tension. Clinton "repeatedly aligned herself with the most consistent realist in the Obama administration [Gates] ... if she and Gates both weigh in, they are much more likely to get their way" (Lizza 2011). Conflicts arose, however, between Jones and other members of the White House security policy team, just as special envoy Richard Holbrooke proved to be a divisive figure, doggedly fighting for a policy shift in Afghanistan up until his untimely death in 2010.

The structure of the security policy team itself is another means of influencing the efficacy of the policymaking process within the administration. The composition of the policy team varies based on the individual preferences of each president and allows him to adjust the input received from various sources. During the Clinton administration, for example, the inclusion of economic advisors such as the secretary of treasury and an official assistant to the president for economic policy in national security policy discussions, exemplified Clinton's particular emphasis on global economic issues. Yet another structural feature of security policy planning was the inclusion by the Obama administration of a series of special advisors, envoys and "czars" to oversee particular aspects of U.S. security policy. While this may have ensured that a particular issue received added focus, it also appeared to have created additional layers of bureaucracy and, in some instances, further complicated an already complex network of planning agencies.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

The National Security Council (NSC) is the principal deliberative body for security policy in an administration. The NSC was created by the landmark 1947 National Security Act that reorganized the security policy structures within the executive branch in an effort to improve coordination between the bureaucratic entities, an effort considered especially necessary after the failure to detect the 1941 surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. President Truman was initially skeptical, but discovered the value of the advisory group once the Korean conflict began in 1950. Each successive administration has structured and utilized the NSC in different ways, but the current *statutory* members of the Council include the president, vice president, the secretaries of state, defense and energy, with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as the military advisor to the council, and the director of National Intelligence as, naturally, the intelligence advisor. Formal meetings of the NSC are usually convened intermittently based on the requirements of the president, in order to coordinate policy and discuss policy options.

In addition to these formal meetings, the National Security Council also has a sizeable bureaucratic staff (approximately 300) that provides advice and analysis for the president, coordinates policy across the executive branch and monitors the implementation of administration policies (Jordan et al. 2009, 216). It is this staff that is often mistakenly referred to as "the NSC," rather than the actual Council convened by the president. The NSC staff is organized both geographically and thematically, with sections responsible for regions such as Africa, Europe or South Asia, as well as sections tasked with keeping tabs on topics as diverse as counterterrorism, international economics and human rights.[2] The former national security advisor Thomas Donilon – now replaced by Susan Rice – approached the National Security Council in this way:

> Like the President, [Donilon] values staff discretion. His rule for hiring at the NSC is to find people who are, in his words, 'high value, low maintenance' ... Obama's NSC adopted the model of the first Bush administration....The most important feature, Donilon said, is that the NSC, based at the White House, controls 'the sole process through which policy would be developed.' (Lizza 2011)

NSC staff members often have a background in government, think tanks, academia, the private sector, or the military. This eclectic mix belies another noteworthy pattern in policymaking circles: the so-called "revolving door" between public service and private institutions. Many Washington think tanks serve as

way-stations for high-level government bureaucrats and political appointees as they cycle in and out of administrations. A handful of these institutions, the Center for Strategic and International Relations (CSIS), Atlantic Council, and Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) among them, also prepare analytical reports that buttress the continuous cycle of strategic documents flowing from each administration, including quadrennial defense reviews, posture reviews, and trend analyses for future security scenarios. In a recent and noteworthy example of this, Andrew Marshall, the legendary head of the Pentagon's Office for Net Assessment, contracted CSBA – headed by a Marshall protégée Andrew Krepinevich – to develop the widely discussed AirSea Battle concept, which was subsequently institutionalized with an office inside the Pentagon (Jaffe 2012).

Atop this bureaucracy sits the National Security Advisor, who is perhaps the most influential security policy advisor in any administration. President Eisenhower created the position – first given the title "special assistant for national security affairs," and later "assistant to the president for national security affairs," and now most commonly referred to as the national security advisor – primarily to coordinate the meetings of the NSC, but its function has expanded dramatically over the years. The National Security Advisor is an "honest broker," ensuring that all options and arguments are presented to the president. Free from institutional or bureaucratic interests, the advisor's only constituency is the president, and can therefore provide unvarnished analyses and monitor the implementation of security policy. In crisis situations, the National Security Advisor may assume a more active coordinating role (Whittaker et al. 2011).

The individuals who have held the position of National Security Advisor approached their responsibilities in dissimilar ways and with varying degrees of success. As will be discussed in the following section, the distinctive personalities and personal philosophies of each advisor have influenced their role in the administration, as have the personal preferences of each president.

The emergence of terrorism as an overarching security threat over the past decade has blurred the boundaries between national security and law enforcement policy due to the continued risk of terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, either by radical factions affiliated with global terrorist networks or domestic groups. Protecting the country from foreign terrorist threats has increasingly included law enforcement measures such as tightened border security, port inspections, airline passenger checks, and enhanced electronic surveillance techniques. Other borderless security threats that have domestic law enforcement aspects include international narcotics trafficking and cyber defense.

The massive new security apparatus constructed in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks includes the Department of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council with a framework and membership similar to the NSC but with its primary focus on domestic security matters. Due to the fact that these two entities deal with such overlapping responsibilities, the Obama administration merged the two and created a single National Security Staff. A 2011 Congressional Research Service report warned however that "the increasing intermingling of national security and law enforcement issues could cause major difficulties for the NSC staff and the national security advisor who is not a law enforcement official," and concluded that "in dealing with policies related to the protection of critical infrastructures, the national security advisor will have an important role, but one inherently different from the traditional responsibilities of the office" and will serve more of a coordinating function (Best 2011: 28–29).

THE VICE PRESIDENT

The role played by the vice president in national security matters can vary dramatically based on the particular preferences of the president and the personal relationship between the two. During the Bush administration, it was widely perceived that Vice President Cheney, as an experienced national security official and skilled bureaucratic infighter, was particularly powerful and exerted a great deal of influence over the decision-making process in the Bush White House. By most accounts, Vice President Biden has also filled an important role as a close advisor to the president on national security matters – active and vocal in deliberations over Afghanistan, Libya, and the decision to send special operations forces to kill Osama bin Laden. Biden reportedly sends his thoughts to the president prior to NSC meetings via personal memo and has on more than one occasion been utilized as a presidential envoy. President Obama explained the usefulness of Biden's counsel on Afghanistan to Bob Woodward:

> Obama later explained to me that he had encouraged the vice president to be an aggressive contrarian. "I said, Joe, I want you to say exactly what you think. And I want you to ask the toughest questions you can think of ... I wanted every argument to be poked hard.... And so in that sense I think Joe served an enormously useful function." At no point, Obama said, did he believe that Biden pushed too hard. (Woodward 2010, 160)

THE SECRETARIES

The national security advisor has no real constituency except for the president himself and is therefore in a position to offer more unconstrained counsel than, for example, the secretary of state or secretary of defense. As head of their respective departments, these two cabinet officials must constantly consider the interests of their bureaucracies when offering advice regarding the national security needs of the country. Obviously, these two sets of obligations are not necessarily at odds with one another, but an unbiased analysis of U.S. security policy options may occasionally suggest adjustments that could weaken a department's influence or budgetary position. In order to retain credibility within their respective bureaucracies and therefore the ability to maintain an effective leadership role, the secretaries cannot be seen as openly advocating policies that would damage their departments. This situation is complicated even more by the fact that these entities function in an advisory capacity and also as agencies responsible for implementing presidential policy on national security matters.

SECRETARY OF STATE

The secretary of state has historically been the principle advisor to the president on foreign policy, but this status has diminished over the years due to a number of developments, most prominent among them being the expanding role of the national security advisor. The State Department comprises a massive bureaucracy divided into regional and 'functional' desks in a manner somewhat similar to the NSC, whereby non-proliferation specialists and South Asia specialists, for example, have overlapping responsibilities. As one scholar notes, this "can lead to striking contrasts in the nature of advice received by the secretary.... As a consequence, the secretary of state is often forced to sort out contradictory recommendations while shepherding a fragmented organization through the policy process" (Jordan et al. 2009, 89–90).

The influence of the secretary in forming national security policy obviously varies according to the situation and the personal chemistry between the secretary and the president. According to some sources, the State Department often fails to meet presidential expectations due to poor analytical work by staff, slow response times to requests, resistance to change, inadequate implementation of presidential policies, lack of leadership in foreign affairs, and a seeming lack of control within its own ranks (Jordan, Taylor et al. 2009, 90). Combined with the inevitable loss of immediate proximity to the president due

to extensive overseas travel, the secretary of state is at a disadvantage in terms of influencing national security decision-making and policy formation. Nevertheless, Secretary John Kerry may be renewing the influence of his office, having played a key role in the Syrian crisis and in negotiating an agreement with Iran.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The waning influence of the secretary of state in security policymaking has been overtaken in recent years by the national security advisor and, in many respects, by the secretary of defense and military leaders. The defense secretary has a particularly challenging management role as the top civilian leader in the Pentagon, exerting civilian control over the expansive military apparatus with multiple, cross-cutting, long-standing institutional interests that are often at odds with the desired policies of a particular administration. It can often appear that the legitimacy of the president's role as commander in chief of the armed forces – as viewed by the military services – can be either strengthened or weakened by the actions and character of a particular secretary of defense.

Furthermore, the institutional differences between Defense and State are substantial. As one scholar noted:

> The primary bureaucracy within the Department of State is deeply involved with traditional diplomatic and consular tasks, embedded in traditional notions of courtly, courteous, Old World diplomacy. The focus is on negotiations and compromise ... The nature of the military profession, as well as the education and socialization of civilian officials and employees, shapes the institutional posture of the Department of Defense. Logically, the posture leans toward the military solution in responding to national security issues. In turn, there is an orientation within the department to ensure adequate staffing levels, resources to develop sophisticated weaponry, and satisfactory compensation for service personnel. (Sarkesian et al. 2008: 95, 101)

Given that the United States has been militarily engaged in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan for over a decade, and utilizes military force through non-conventional means such as Special Forces operations and targeted strikes via unmanned aerial vehicle, these aspects of U.S. security policy have naturally taken on an oversized role. Correspondingly, the secretary of defense will logically have a greater voice in the policymaking process regarding the planning of such operations and their role in the broader context of the nation's overall security posture.

The divergent bureaucratic cultures and ideological proclivities of the State Department, the Pentagon and the White House appeared to surface during the first period of the Obama administration. According to some accounts, advisors were divided not only according to their preference for hard power or soft power, but also on their gender. Journalist Ryan Lizza reported that "the realists who view foreign policy as a great chess game – and who want to focus on China and India – are usually men. The idealists, who talk about democracy and human rights, are often women" (Lizza 2011). Former State Department director of policy planning Ann-Marie Slaughter similarly observed that "the world of states is still the world of high politics, hard power, realpolitik, and largely, men.... The world of societies is still too often the world of low politics, soft power, human rights, democracy, and development, and, largely, women" (Slaughter 2012).

THE MILITARY

In the formal policy process, military leaders have traditionally been viewed strictly as a source of professional military advice on the application of force and its likely efficacy. While this has evolved over the past several decades, the expectation remains that military commanders – comprising the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which includes a chairman and vice chairman along with the head of each of the four services

(Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps – collectively and colloquially known as the Service Chiefs), the combatant commanders in the six regional Areas of Responsibility (Europe, Central, Pacific, Northern, Southern, Africa) and those of the three functional commands (Special Operations, Strategic, Transportation) – will provide the best nonpolitical military advice possible to the civilian leadership. During the past decade, ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have also given the commanders of U.S. forces in those conflicts a particularly significant role in providing military advice to the president and other policymakers within the administration.

The nonpolitical nature of this advice can often be a difficult standard to maintain, as military leaders have their own service-based interests and biases, just as the political leadership also have personal, ideological, and institutional stakes in finding "objective" military advice that supports their desired policy positions. In this way, military leaders may find themselves either co-opted to advocate a particular position by political leaders or rebuffed if their professional opinion is at odds with a desired policy outcome. In other cases, military commanders exhibit keen political gamesmanship when providing advice in order to frame military options in such a way that the only politically viable choice is the one preferred by the military. Therefore, the president and his advisors – in a similar fashion to the advice received from the NSC or the Secretaries – attempt to centralize the policymaking process within the White House as much as possible.

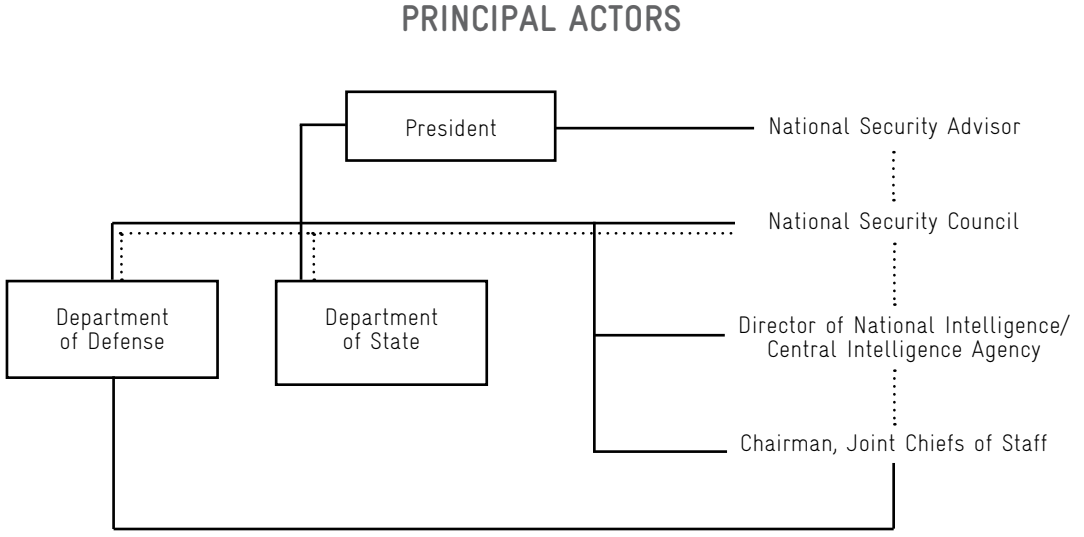
When the Obama administration was at work on an intensive review of Afghanistan strategy, General Stanley McChrystal wrote a secret report recommending a comprehensive counterinsurgency approach, which immediately leaked to the press and left the President in a dilemma: accept the now-public advice of the military commander or reject it. Soon afterwards, McChrystal further limited Obama's political flexibility by publically stating that a limited counterterrorism operation favored by Vice President Biden would not be successful. When McChrystal's troop request finally came, it contained three options: sending 80,000 additional troops for a robust country-wide counterinsurgency operation; a limited COIN operation with 40,000 more troops; and a 10,000 troop option focused primarily on training the Afghan military. The higher number was assumed to be politically infeasible and the lower number ineffective, thereby leaving McChrystal's preferred troop increase as the only viable option (Baker 2009, Woodward 2010). Obama, frustrated by being presented with so few options, restarted the analytical process and ultimately decided upon a variation of McChrystal's options.

THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

This umbrella term includes the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the intelligence entities organized under the Department of Defense, including the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGIA), the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the National Security Agency (NSA) and the smaller intelligence agencies within each of the service branches. The investigation into the 2001 terrorist attacks revealed a significant lack of coordination among these many agencies, resulting in a failure to "connect the dots" regarding the terrorist plot. Several investigating committees recommended amending the law to

> create and sufficiently staff a statutory Director of National Intelligence (DNI) who shall be the President's principal advisor on intelligence and shall have the full range of management, budgetary and personnel responsibilities needed to make the entire U.S. Intelligence Community operate as a coherent whole. (Best 2010: 2)

This resulted in the 2004 Intelligence Reform Act, establishing the DNI as head of the intelligence community, though the position has not been without controversy regarding the ability of one individual to coordinate such a broad range of agencies.



The principle actors responsible for evaluating the strategic environment and formulating U.S. grand strategy. The solid lines indicate relationships with direct access; the dashed lines show more informal or consultative relationships. Due to the fact that many policy decisions are crisis-driven, the actual processes of policy formation will vary, but will normally include these actors. (Sarkesian 2008: 80)

There has been explosive growth in intelligence collection and analysis over the past decade. As *Washington Post* journalists Dana Priest and William Arkin wrote in the lead article of their two-year investigation ending in 2010:

> The U.S. intelligence budget is vast, publicly announced last year as $75 billion, 2 ½ times the size it was on Sept. 10, 2001. But the figure doesn't include many military activities or domestic counterterrorism programs. At least 20 percent of the government organizations that exist to fend off terrorist threats were established or refashioned in the wake of 9/11. Many that existed before the attacks grew to historic proportions as the Bush administration and Congress gave agencies more money than they were capable of responsibly spending. The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency, for example, has gone from 7,500 employees in 2002 to 16,500 today. The budget of the National Security Agency, which conducts electronic eavesdropping, doubled. Thirty-five Joint Terrorism Task Forces became 106. It was phenomenal growth that began almost as soon as the Sept. 11 attacks ended. (Priest and Arkin 2010)

Over the past several decades, intelligence estimates on a range of issues have played key roles in strategic planning and added fuel to political battles over policy, from the much disputed 1995 National Intelligence Estimate concerning the ballistic missile threat to the United States, the range of intelligence data gathered and presented to the Bush White House regarding Iraq and WMDs, to the intelligence briefing presented by Secretary of State Colin Powell before the United Nations during the run-up to the Iraq War. Even experienced and well-meaning intelligence experts can differ on the interpretation of data. During Congressional testimony in April 2013, DNI James Clapper and DIA chief Michael Flynn offered a rare public acknowledgement that disagreement arose over the assessment of North Korea's technical ability to construct a workable nuclear warhead, with the CIA being more skeptical of this possibility than the DIA.[3]

The intelligence community also generates a series of reports such as classified and unclassified versions of national intelligence estimates mentioned above, but also including a more lengthy report by the National Intelligence Council that examines political, military, demographic and other societal trends in order to make some predictions as to the future state

of international security. These *Global Trend* reports have been published roughly every four years since 1996 and provide policymakers with input regarding current global trends and suggesting possible near-term futures.

CONCLUSION

The power of the president to influence the direction and scope of security and defense policy is unrivaled. A host of other actors is intimately involved in the evaluation of the strategic landscape and the formulation of policy options, but the extent to which this information is utilized depends on the individual occupying the Oval Office. The president and his closest advisors must nevertheless take a number of factors into account, including the practicalities of implementing policies. Variations among presidents regarding their individual decision-making preferences will affect the relative influence of the other actors such as the members of the National Security Council. But due to the centralization of decision-making power and access to information, the broad conceptualization of U.S. security policy rests firmly with the White House.

PROCESSES OF STRATEGIC EVALUATION

An extensive body of academic literature has examined virtually all aspects of U.S. policymaking. This study emphasizes the processes associated with developing a strategic understanding of international political events and generating initial responses to those events. Within this narrow slice of policymaking, there is a distinction between generating responses while in the midst of a particular crisis such as those in Libya or Syria, and long-term strategic planning that involves an interpretation of the security environment and the generation of policy options to respond to systemic pressures over time. Many of the same actors may be involved in both types of policymaking, although crisis response decision-making will obviously tend to involve a much smaller group of advisors than the strategic evaluation of the international system. The number of regional and subject experts that are relevant or useful in a particular crisis is more limited, as is the number of institutional stakeholders. Decision-making during crises must remain flexible and responsive due to the dynamic nature of such situations, making extensive advisory meetings impractical and inefficient.

In some instances, the policy process appears fairly sequential and forms a straightforward loop. An issue is raised by one or more actors within the policymaking community. It is then analyzed and debated until a set of policy options are agreed upon. The policies are approved by the administration and funds appropriated by Congress. One or more agencies implement the policy, its effects are gauged and that feedback is incorporated into the issue analysis for revision, whereby the loop is complete and the process begins anew. Despite the innumerable variations and complexities of American policymaking, this basic model remains a useful baseline for understanding the first portion of the process to be focused on here.

EVALUATION IN THE NSC

The structure of the NSC has remained fairly consistent for several decades. The first national security memorandum issued by an administration usually outlines the composition of its National Security Council – including members of three policy coordination entities: the Principals Committee (PC); the Deputies Committee (DC); and the Interagency Policy Committees (or IPCs ... these were termed Policy Coordinating Committees during the Bush administration).

The least senior of the three, the Interagency Policy Committees, acts as the wide end of the policy coordination funnel. The IPCs, according to one account, provides much of the

> 'heavy lifting' in analyzing policy issues and developing policy options and recommendations that provide policymakers with flexibility and a range of options that are politically acceptable and minimize the risk of failure. Interagency groups must also develop policy options that advance U.S. interests through coordinated actions often involving many departments and agencies. (Whittaker et al. 2011: 34)

The IPCs are organized either by geographic or functional expertise that gives rise to cross-cutting and interrelated analytical responsibilities. Membership in IPCs is flexible and can include political appointees (usually from the deputy assistant secretary level), senior military officers and other experts (Jordan et al. 2009, 221). The collection of participants from different departments and agencies, combined with the cross-cutting regional and functional policy specialization, results in constant tensions, disagreements and diverging interests. According to some accounts, regional specialists tend to dominate the process despite lacking expertise on specific functional issues. Disagreements arise not only due to dissimilar interpretations of a particular situation or conflicting departmental philosophies, but also due to more fundamental problems of finding workable solutions to complex issues – about which knowledgeable experts will have diverse viewpoints.

The IPCs normally follow a five-part process that begins, naturally enough, by *defining the problem* at hand in order to determine what national interests are at stake, the actors involved, the type of information that is known and that which must be collected. Next, the IPC might *issue terms of reference* that lay out a framework for analyzing the issue and decide upon a procedural structure for IPC meetings on the topic. The committee *assesses the policy options and outlines a strategy*, in which it designates the implementing agencies, the operational capabilities required and the level of coordination needed among the departments and with allies. Next, the group begins the *operational planning* for implementing the strategy, including specific policy instruments and detailed plans for ensuring smooth cooperation among agencies. Finally, an *integrated policy options document* is drafted that describes the specific strategic approach, the objectives, scope and timeline, the actions required, the chain of command for implementation, delegation of responsibilities, and the identification of what assets are required (Whittaker et al. 2011: 34–36).

There are very few issues handled by the IPCs that are completely new; the committees often re-work existing issues or react to new circumstances. For every issue it handles, an IPC has three basic choices: compromise to achieve consensus; continue to work the issue in search of a consensus; or elevate the issue to the next level – that of the Deputies Committee. There is a strong incentive to reach a consensus view among the IPCs and avoid elevating too many issues to the DC. The desire to find common ground can therefore result in "watered-down, least common denominator policy" or gridlock: one NSC staff member noted that preventing policy from being made was the easiest outcome to achieve in the interagency process (Jordan et al. 2009, 221, Whittaker et al. 2011: 35).

The Deputies Committee, as defined by presidential policy directive, currently consists of the deputy secretaries of state, treasury, energy, homeland security and defense; the deputy attorney general; the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget; the deputy to the U.S. representative to the United Nations; the deputy director of national intelligence; the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the meetings are usually chaired by the assistant national security advisor (Obama 2009). The DC normally convenes daily to review the recommendations and issue papers from the various IPCs or deliberate over issues that the interagency committees are unable to resolve. Often, a paper prepared by the NSC staff will be circulated amongst the DC members prior to meetings. At the DC level in particular, the sheer number of polices to be decided upon has led to the practice of circulating issue papers in lieu of formal meetings for members to review. This "paper DC" process may often have four or five papers simultaneously in circulation (Whittaker et al. 2011: 33). Issues that cannot be resolved at the DC are passed up to the most senior policy coordination entity, the Principals Committee.

The Principals Committee, which includes all the formal members of the National Security Council except the president and vice president, is tasked with finding consensus among the various departments and agencies in order to reduce the number of contradictory and uncoordinated policy recommendations presented to the president. Whereas the entire NSC may meet only intermittently based on the needs of the president, the PC may convene as often as once or twice a week to discuss policy. Issue papers are often circulated among the PC in a manner similar to the "paper DC." With modern technological options available for interactive discussions, telephonic conference calls or the secure video teleconference system might be utilized for some meetings, but Principal Committee meetings have usually been held in person during the Obama administration. Topics handled during 2010 included, for example, strategies for Iraq and Afghanistan, terrorism threats, U.S.–China strategic and economic relations, relations with Pakistan, North Korea, Haiti and Iran, the tsunami in Japan, and the Arab Spring (Whittaker et al. 2011: 32).

In August 2010, President Obama penned a five page memo to the other members of his National Security Council, stating that "progress toward political reform and openness in the Middle East and North Africa lags behind the other regions," and while there was "evidence of growing citizen discontent," regimes might "opt for repression rather than reform." This might well put the U.S. in a disadvantageous position whereby their authoritarian allies in the region were weakened by internal strife, but American credibility would be damaged if Washington continued to support the regimes (Lizza 2011). Unsatisfied with the intelligence analyses too heavily favoring status quo outcomes, Obama directed three NSC staffers to conduct a review to find tailored policies for encouraging political reform in each of the countries in the region. The effort, led by Dennis Ross, Samantha Power, Gayle Smith and Michael McFaul, became known as the "Nerd Directorate" and took on the air of a graduate seminar on democratic revolutions. The group was completing their work in December when a Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire in protest and sparked a chain reaction of revolutions throughout the region (Lizza 2011; Sanger 2012a, 280–282).

EVALUATION VIA THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

Many of the policy recommendations resulting from the interagency process described above eventually surface in oral or written statements by an administration. Presidential speeches accompanying a new policy or a shift in existing policy may include elements of the NSC's work, just as the resulting policy reflects a consensus position hashed out within the interagency process. At other times, a presidential directive may be used to communicate a broad policy direction, while legally binding executive orders are usually reserved for more specific issues and require explicit actions to be taken by the agencies. The

document that most reflects the NSC's interagency process, however, is the national security strategy.

Since the passage of the landmark 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act that made significant adjustments to the defense bureaucracy, each administration is required to draft and submit to Congress a national security strategy (NSS) document annually. The National Security Strategy is the only government-wide national security document published – other related strategies are narrower in scope and deal with specific functional or agency-wide strategies – and the NSS therefore serves as an "umbrella" strategy that provides guidance for other strategy documents such as the National Defense Strategy, the National Military Strategy or the Quadrennial Defense Review. Notably, the 2012 DPG stands outside the normal hierarchy of documents as a National Security Strategy or a National Defense Strategy, in part because such defense planning documents are usually classified. The 2012 DPG has therefore been treated as an important policy signal, but lacks the institutional weight of an NSS.

The NSS report should, according to the legislation, include a description of the global interests, goals and objectives central to U.S. national security; the foreign policy, worldwide commitments and defense capabilities necessary to deter aggression and implement the national security strategy; proposed use of various elements of national power (military, economic, political) to achieve the nation's security goals; and an evaluation of the adequacy of these capabilities to implement the national security strategy. By requiring the submission of the NSS early each year, Congress also intended the NSS process to encourage administrations to pay more careful attention to the linkage between ends and means in its strategic planning.

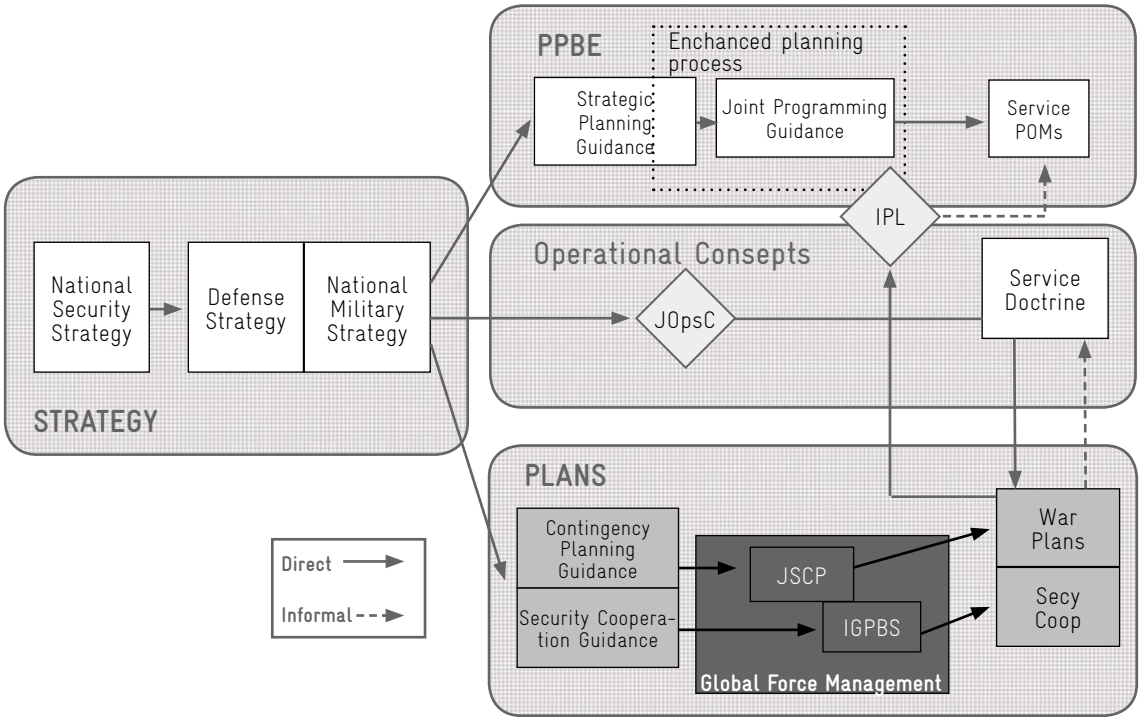
Despite these lofty ambitions, only the Clinton administration has managed to produce an NSS each year while in office. The documents tend to be political in nature, often fail to reflect budgetary constraints and are characterized by vague formulations that are difficult to translate into actual policy guidance. In many ways, the NSS does not signify a true strategic document: a true national security strategy would no doubt be classified. Nevertheless, as one author argues, the NSS

> is the best example of "purposeful adaptation" by the American government to changing global realities and responsibilities. It expresses strategic vision, what the United States stands for in the world, its priorities, and a sensing of how the instruments of national power – the diplomatic, economic, and military – will be arrayed. Since it is truly an interagency product, the NSS also serves to discipline the interagency system to understand the president's agenda and priorities and to develop a common language that gives coherence to policy. (Marcella 2008: 21–22)

For the 2010 National Security Strategy, the initial drafters included Obama speechwriter and Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, who worked closely with several individuals at the National Security Staff (the combined NSC-HSC staff in the Obama administration) Office of Strategic Planning, led by Ambassador Mary Yates. After reviewing past security strategies and speaking with the drafters of the 2006 NSS (Peter Feaver and Will Inboden), the 2010 drafters based their initial work on a preliminary strategy document that had been developed by the new administration, along with Obama speeches in Cairo and Oslo to ascertain the president's viewpoints. Over the course of the next six to eight months, they worked together with the NSC staff until an initial draft was eventually circulated among the various departments for feedback, nearly 70 percent of which was incorporated into the document. National Security Advisor Jones approved the final draft before it was subsequently approved by the DC and the PC before its approval and signature by President Obama (Stolberg 2012).

Aside from the National Security Strategy, the most anticipated strategic document produced by an administration is the Quadrennial Defense Review. Mandated by law to be submitted by the Department of Defense every four years, the QDR is intended to be a "comprehensive examination" of "national defense strategy, force structure, force modernization

DOCUMENTS AND PROCESSES IN U.S. DEFENSE POLICY PLANNING



An overview of the most important documents and processes in U.S. defense policy planning. The National Security Strategy lays out the overarching grand strategic concepts which are then operationalized in the National Defense Strategy and the National Military Strategy. Defense spending requirements are extrapolated and injected into the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) processes, while operational plans are drafted based on force requirements gleaned from the strategy documents. The Quadrennial Defense Review, which ostensibly conducts a holistic review of strategy, plans, force structures and budgets, is not included here as it has no formal authority within the policy process. (Meinhart 2006: 306)

plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program" to inform defense planning over a twenty-year time frame (Daggett 2010: 5). The year-long QDR review process consumes hundreds of hours and involves a broad swath of the security community both inside and outside of the Pentagon. Its purpose is to examine "defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan and other elements of the defense program and policies," looking 20 years into the future.

The QDR is both highly discussed and anticipated among defense analysts, while it is also consistently derided after each release for its irrelevance and failure to prioritize. Jim Thomas of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments noted recently at a QDR conference hosted by CSIS that he couldn't think of "a worse way of making good strategy" than the QDR, when the process involves "getting a couple of thousand people involved from across the bureaucracy, having lots of working groups, the coordination process, writing an unclassified document with lots of glossy pictures" (Sayler 2013). His colleague at CSBA, Barry Watts, agreed and called for the entire QDR process to be discarded.

It is true that each of the three previous QDRs have generally failed to outline the specific military means required to achieve the nation's strategic goals within the Defense Department's budgetary constraints. Like the NSS, it can by no means be considered a

true "strategy" document. Rather, the value of the QDR seems to be as a concept document. Because the process incorporates such a broad group of security and defense actors, it offers a snapshot of how the U.S. views the international security environment, its national interests, threat analysis, how the U.S. conceptualizes conflict and under what circumstances policymakers anticipate the future application of American military force.

For the 2006 QDR, the previous 2001 QDR was used as a reference point even though the administration intended to use the new document to transition from the previous process, much of which occurred prior to the September 2001 terrorist attacks. Deputy secretary of defense and the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff co-chaired a senior working group that reviewed the analysis that had been conducted by six separate study teams, each focused on a particular issue area. Each of the study teams coordinated its work with the other groups to avoid duplication, and held weekly meetings to review substance and process. For the 2010 QDR, Congress authorized an Independent Panel to act as a "shadow QDR" that would monitor the process, and issue its own report. The administration used the 2008 National Defense Strategy as its starting point.

With the undersecretary of defense for policy coordinating the effort, four issue teams worked through the analyses with a fifth team responsible for integrating the work of the other four. The results were circulated among the various departments and final comments were obtained by the secretary of defense. The QDR was coordinated with the results of other analyses being conducted simultaneously, including the Nuclear Posture Review and the Ballistic Missile Defense Review. The process benefitted from having leadership with experience from previous QDRs, including Flournoy, Jim Miller and Kathleen Hicks (Sayler 2013).

The QDR, despite being consistently ridiculed by defense analysts and pundits as a meaningless exercise, reflects an important analytical and organizational process with potential consequences for future force structure adjustments. As a result, the process has become increasingly bureaucratic and permanent QDR offices have been established among the various stakeholders within the Pentagon and the service branches. With so many interested parties involved, the QDR process has little hope of producing a truly strategic analysis upon which defense planning can be based. The release of the 2010 QDR was particularly poorly timed. The National Security Strategy, from which the QDR should formally take its guidance, was delayed until May, four months after the QDR had already been released. The defense budget cuts later announced by Defense Secretary Gates and the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance also failed to reflect the QDR analysis, leaving many to view the document as less relevant than it otherwise might have been. Some have warned that Congress may choose to refine or even eliminate the QDR process entirely if the 2014 edition proves to be unsatisfactory (Freedberg 2013).

EVALUATING SHORT-TERM STRATEGIC RESPONSES

Despite these attempts at long-term strategic planning, the substance of U.S. security policy often results from global events, trends and crises that demand a response: The decision to conduct a special forces operation to kill bin Laden, the 2010 Afghan "surge," the NATO operation in Libya, multiple crises on the Korean peninsula, the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria. In these instances, the formal policy planning processes described above are supplemented – or even supplanted – by more informal, ad hoc policy development arrangements. Oftentimes, these arrangements are centered in the White House with the president's National Security Council and military advisors. Whereas the more formal bureaucratic processes are prone to a number of factors that inhibit a highly rational, cost-benefit calculating approach to policymaking, including diverging departmental philosophies, bureaucratic

infighting over influence and agency interests, interpersonal conflicts and psychological aspects of individual decision-making, it is this final category that can have the most influence on short-term strategic responses.[4]

The president and his closest advisors are regularly called upon to make a range of policy choices for which a comprehensive and rational cost-benefit analysis is not possible, given the information available or the time frame within which a decision must be made. Most security policy problems are immensely complex, involving crosscutting interests and significant levels of uncertainty – often irreducible uncertainties that include not only "known unknowns" but also "unknown unknowns" – which increases the degree of strategic risk. Individuals often employ a variety of tactics that allow them to make choices under these conditions. One common cognitive shortcut is to analyze by way of historical analogy, which leads some to speak about negotiations with the Iranian regime as a policy of appeasement similar to Neville Chamberlain's agreement with Adolf Hitler in 1938, or of the containment of China in similar terms as those of the Soviet Union during the early years of the Cold War. This example concerning Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, from journalist David Sanger's latest book, provides an apt illustration of this tendency:

> "When Bibi says this is an existential threat," one senior Israeli intelligence official told me, referring to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "he means this moment is reminiscent of 1930" and the rise of Nazi Germany. To the Americans, he said, "it is more like 1949," when the Soviets tested their first nuclear device. That brought many confrontations that veered toward catastrophe, most notably the Cuban missile crisis. But with skill, sabotage, and diplomacy, the Soviets were contained.
>
> The Israeli's deepest fear was that Obama believed that ultimately Iran would succeed in its quest, and that America had a Plan B: Soviet-like containment. Inside the White House, the president was wrestling with exactly that question – whether what worked in the Cold War could work in the Middle East. (Sanger 2012a, 151)

The Vietnam War was another obvious historical analogy for the conflict in Afghanistan, and a number of high-level officials in the Obama White House reportedly read Gordon M. Goldstein's book on the Vietnam conflict, *Lessons in Disaster*. As Peter Baker of the *New York Times* reported, "Among the conclusions that Mr. Donilon and the White House team drew from the book was that both President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson failed to question the underlying assumption about monolithic Communism and the domino theory – clearly driving the Obama advisors to rethink the nature of al-Qaeda and the Taliban" (Baker 2009).

Other common cognitive patterns include "wishful thinking,", which leads to difficult problems not being prioritized simply due to the belief that a solution will present itself once the problem has been identified; "negative imaging" that rules out particular policy options by assuming the likely outcome of those options will have exceedingly negative consequences; or "inferences of impossibility" that question the premises upon which a policy option is based (Halperin 1974). These types of cognitive processes often operate in conjunction with an overarching world view that simplifies the complexities of the global security landscape. While these and other similar processes are commonplace and often serve a useful purpose, they nevertheless distort reality through their simplifications. There is a temptation to view the world primarily as one infested with global terrorism and the growing spread of weapons of mass destruction, or an ideological battle between democracies and autocracies, or as a geopolitical contest for global dominance between great powers. Once a particular ideological framework is chosen, it is within this framework that national interests, threats, strategic goals and effective policy options are understood.

The Obama administration, and the president in particular, has shown a much greater appreciation of the complexities of the international security environment than that of his predecessor, a trait

academics find refreshing and policy advocates frustrating. In a number of high-profile decision-making processes and key policy speeches, the president has acknowledged not only the overwhelming complexities and interconnected nature of the security landscape but also the limits of America's ability to shape the outcome of events. Additionally, the Obama administration has revealed a greater acceptance of operational risk than some observers expected, but the string of policy choices made over the past five years are nevertheless characterized by an emphasis on limiting the current and future role of the United States in almost every region apart from East Asia.

While extensive meetings of senior administration officials during crisis situations are hardly unique, the Obama administration appears to have conducted lengthy review processes at the behest of the president that have actively sought out new approaches to existing security policy dilemmas. Over the past five years, a renewed emphasis on the hunt for Osama Bin Laden resulted in a successful special operations mission that killed the al-Qaeda leader. A long review of Afghanistan strategy in which the president was heavily involved resulted in a surge of 30,000 troops in combination with an agreed-upon withdrawal date. And a review of the political instability inherent in the Middle East just prior to the chain of events known collectively as the Arab Spring, was designed to outline U.S. options in the region but found few obvious courses of action.

CONCLUSION

US security policy formation is extraordinarily complex. Even the narrow focus of this chapter, which is limited to strategic interpretation and the formulation of short-term responses to crises, involves dozens of agencies and individual personalities. The most noticeable trait in security policy formation is also the least surprising: the dominant role of the president in shaping policy outcomes. A president influences the type of policy advice he receives even before his presidency begins, through the policy advisors that become associated with the campaign and eventually form the basis of his White House staff. The makeup of the NSC is quite influential, but only as far as the president is interested in using the formal policy processes at his disposal. President Obama has used formal processes often, though he often expands their mandate and becomes much more personally involved in the details than his predecessor.

The personal involvement of President Obama is particularly interesting, given the fundamental difference in foreign policy approaches exhibited by the two men. Obama's presidential ambitions relied heavily on his strong opposition to the war in Iraq and the overall direction of Bush's foreign policy. But once in office, President Obama formulated a set of policies that have much more in common with his predecessor than his statements as a candidate might have suggested. As one anonymous senior official commented to journalist David Sanger, Obama "comes at issues completely different than Bush did. Obama worries far more about collateral damage, about the precedent the United States sets when it acts. But when it's decision time about whether to order a strike, or use a certain kind of weapon, he often comes out pretty close to where Bush did" (Sanger 2012a, xvi).

POLICY FORMATION, EVALUATION AND RESPONSE

The elements of strategic evaluation and policy formation during the Obama administration suggest a number of trends in U.S. policy formation that have either been brewing since the end of the Cold War, emerged during the Bush administration and continued during the Obama period, or are new trends particular to this administration. This chapter will highlight three trends relating to the process of policy formation, then substantive issues regarding strategic evaluation – including threat perceptions and grand strategic approaches.

POLICY PROCESS TRENDS

President Obama has repeatedly demonstrated a tendency to become intensely focused on the details of security policy, often expressing frustration with the limited choices being presented to him. In March 2009, he ordered an additional 21,000 troops to Afghanistan and replaced U.S. commander General McKiernan several months later with General Stanley McChrystal, who advocated a counterinsurgency-based approach to the conflict. When McChrystal requested even more troops later that summer with the three troop level options, Obama initiated a three-month strategic review of Afghanistan policy that ultimately resulted in the combination of a temporary surge followed by a steady withdrawal of forces. The policymaking process was, according to veteran *New York Times* reporter Peter Baker, "a case study in decision making in the Obama White House – intense, methodical, rigorous, earnest and at times deeply frustrating for nearly all involved. It was a virtual seminar in Afghanistan and Pakistan, led by a president described by one participant as something 'between a college professor and a gentle cross-examiner'" (Baker 2009).

The president conducted ten meetings with his national security team over the three months, not including the countless hours spent by the State Department, Pentagon and NSC staff in meetings and preparing memos and briefings. As national security advisor at the time Jim Jones commented, "The process was exhaustive, but any time you get the president of the United States to devote 25 hours, anytime you get that kind of commitment, you know it was serious business" (Baker 2009). Frustrated with the options being presented by the military commanders but in agreement that troop levels needed to rise, Obama sought out other strategies and eventually forced a compromise solution supported by his NSC team: a more limited troop increase of 30,000 troops to focus on degrading the Taliban and training the Afghan military, with a specific announced date for starting the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country.

President Obama wrote a sizeable memo during the review process staking out his views on the strategy, and acknowledged that "Maybe I am getting too far down in the weeds on this, but I feel like I have too" (Woodward 2010, 315). General David Petraeus expressed his surprise that Obama would become so focused on the policy details, observing, "There's not a president in history that's dictated five single-spaced pages in his life. That's what the staff gets paid to do" (Woodward 2010, 327). The detailed policy planning by the president occurred in other situations as well, including the operation in Libya. As Obama explained with regard to Libya,

> "It's a hard problem. What the process is going to do is try to lead you to a binary decision. Here are the pros and cons of going in. Here are the pros and cons of not going in. The process pushes toward black and white answers: it's less good with shades of gray." (Lewis 2012)

For the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance document entitled *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, which called for a rebalancing of U.S. strategic priorities toward the Asia-Pacific region, President Obama again became personally

involved in the details. According to media reports, the president "spent a substantial amount of time with military officials on the new strategy, which they defined as six meetings he had on the strategy with military leaders and regional commanders between September and late December" (Bumiller and Shanker 2012). He further demonstrated his personal involvement with a highly unusual appearance at the Pentagon for the press briefing unveiling the new strategy.

The strategic rebalance toward the Asia Pacific has been continuously under pressure since its announcement, particularly with regard to the civil war raging in Syria. Despite calls by a number of leading foreign policy figures in the United States and abroad, President Obama maintained a non-interventionist approach. Despite this, an apparently unscripted remark by the president at a press conference in August 2012 – in which he stated that the use of chemical weapons would cross a "red line" and change his calculus regarding non-intervention – put the integrity of the United States at stake when the Assad regime ultimately employed chemical weapons in May and August of 2013 (Baker et al. 2013). The administration certainly would have been pressured to act even without the "red line" statement, but the comments added the dangerous element of U.S. credibility the president could not ignore in order to maintain U.S. deterrence.[5]

GREATER INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Though the perfect coordination of a state's policies is a desirable, however unachievable, goal towards which U.S. policymakers might strive, past administrations have paid varying amounts of attention to the pervasive problem of policy integration. According to a significant 2008 study, the Project on National Security Reform, the United States has consistently lacked effective processes for developing strategies that connect means to ends. While integration is much more challenging during the implementation phase, it has also proven difficult to integrate the elements of national power even at the conceptual of strategy formation. The number of stakeholders and the inefficient bureaucratic procedures involved in the process often hinder a coherent, whole-of-government approach. A number of developments in the Obama administration, however, suggest that such an approach has received slightly more emphasis.

The instances in which the president has devoted additional time and effort to the formation of policy details during his administration have often occurred when Obama has desired to develop a more coherent approach or make a particular policy statement that establishes a broader framework within which his administration's policies can be understood, such as the Afghan policy review, the Oslo speech in 2009, or the 2012 strategic guidance document. Additionally, the Obama administration partially adopted one of the Project on National Security Reform study's recommendations when it merged the National Security Council and Homeland Security Council staffs into one National Security Staff. According to one study, although the reorganization "did not substantially affect the normal practices of crisis response, policy development, and implementation oversight, it did have the effect of fully integrating international, transnational and homeland security matters, and placing all policy matters under a single organizational chain of command" (Locher 2008, Whittaker et al. 2011).

The strategy documents released in 2010 – the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Nuclear Posture Review, and the Ballistic Missile Defense Review – also reflect a concerted effort to develop a strategic framework that displays internal coherence. With the ambition of coordinating the documents' contents, policymakers consciously included this goal in the drafting process. The finished products exhibit a closer degree of amalgamation and cite one another when appropriate. The 2012 DSG should also be mentioned, simply due to the fact that the administration strove to develop a much more resource-informed strategy than with previous strategy documents, including the aforementioned 2010 QDR. Although pressured to formulate a strategic justification for an impending round of defense budget cuts, the 2012 guidance appeared to be a serious attempt to prioritize strategic choices and develop a budget sensitive concept for U.S. defense and security policy.

PENTAGON VS. FOGGY BOTTOM

In the post-9/11 world, the use of military force has driven the U.S. response to the threat from global terrorism. The national security apparatus has been greatly expanded both within the United States and abroad, with a broader mandate for intelligence collection and kinetic operations around the world. As U.S. policymakers began to view counterterrorism operations through a counterinsurgency-strategy prism that prioritized development assistance as well as military action, the nation's armed forces increasingly took on tasks traditionally reserved for diplomatic personnel – particularly in regions such as Central Asia and Africa. In addition, organizations such as the CIA that had previously been primarily intelligence and analysis organs gradually became important operational actors with small kill teams for liquidating terrorist suspects and a sizeable fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles for targeted killings.

The heavy emphasis on military affairs and operations in U.S. foreign policy has resulted in an imbalance that favors the continued prioritization of the Defense Department. U.S. Combatant Commanders are treated with great respect within their regions due to the resources they have at their disposal and their ability to initiate not only highly beneficial military-military cooperation. They also have the means and wherewithal to conduct humanitarian and socio-economic projects that are viewed by the Defense Department as valuable preventative measures for the maintenance of regional security, but are also valuable for local leaders as a way to demonstrate their ability to provide for their various constituencies. The State Department has far less flexibility and fewer resources to do likewise.

In some respects, the overall position of the State Department in security policymaking appears to be trending downward due to chronic underfunding. The department comprises two principle entities: a domestically-based Civil Service of diplomats and analysts, and the overseas Foreign Service consisting of the cadre of foreign diplomats conducting the day-to-day diplomacy at overseas embassies and consulates. It is this overseas component that has been especially vulnerable. One well-known Department assessment from 1999 warned that the agency was near "a state of crisis" because of its inadequate and outdated infrastructure, and due to an insufficient allocation of resources "our overseas presence is perilously close to the point of system failure" (State 1999). During the Bush Administration, Secretary of State Colin Powell began addressing these shortcomings, as did his replacement Condoleezza Rice with the introduction of her plans for "transformational diplomacy."

Still, the weakening of the Foreign Service has continued. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who realized that military personnel were increasingly being used in missions better suited for diplomatic personnel, argued repeatedly throughout his tenure that funding for international diplomacy should be increased. He noted that "we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and culture.... It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the Internet than America" (Tyson 2007). Post-Cold War cuts to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the disbanding of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) had the effect of "gutting ... America's ability to engage, assist, and communicate with other parts of the world" (Tyson 2007). Later, as defense secretary in the Obama administration, he repeated these warnings together with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

In his book *Little America*, Rajiv Chandrasekaran reports that as recently as 2011, the State Department failed to deliver civilian personnel for counterinsurgency (COIN) inspired providential reconstruction teams in Afghanistan as promised. Chandrasekaran writes:

> After a year in Kandahar, Brigadier General Ken Dahl came to believe the military had set itself an impossible task by conceiving a COIN strategy that the State Department could not fulfill. "The main effort in COIN is civilians, but they never signed up for it," Dahl told me. "So what you have is folly: We have a counterinsurgency doctrine we can't execute." (Chandrasekaran 2012, 324, 347)

Throughout his reporting, the USAID mission to Afghanistan is generally portrayed as a hindrance to progress: insular, counterproductive, and bureaucratic.

The Foreign Service remains frail not only due to budgetary neglect, but also institutional issues. In a recent opinion piece in the *Washington Post*, several former diplomats argued that the Foreign Service is being "marginalized" due in part to "the overwhelming – and growing – presence of political appointees in mid-level and top leadership positions at the State Department" that "spawns opportunism and political correctness, weakens *esprit de corps* within the service and emaciates institutional memory" (Johnson et al. 2013). They argue provocatively that "the professional career service that is intended to be the backbone of that diplomacy no longer claims a lead role at the State Department or in the formation or implementation of foreign policy" (Johnson et al. 2013). The reduced role of the State Department in implementing U.S. security policy abroad impacts its influence in shaping policy at the strategic level. Lacking adequate operational capacity within State, it is less likely that strategic planning will include measures that involve them and also less likely that the Department's input is taken into account.

STRATEGIC EVALUATION TRENDS

Very few analysts believe that the security policy of any state resembles a rational, linear process that begins with an identification of national interests and the threats to those interests, followed by the creation of a set of strategic goals, and finally the drafting and flawless implementation of a grand strategy to accomplish those goals. Each administration produces a set of strategic documents that contain many of the details that might be neatly placed in such a linear policymaking format, but such an analysis would be deceiving – just as it would be a mistake to ignore them completely. Obviously, a truly accurate set of strategic documents would be classified rather than openly distributed to the public, and the national security strategies and quadrennial defense reviews should be understood as carrying a political message as well as outlining strategic thinking. The set of documents – and the set of policy decisions – are best understood as points on scatter plot. A trend line can usually be discerned from the sometimes disparate collection of policy statements. This section will review some of the broad trend lines in American global threat evaluation and grand strategic response.

TRENDS IN THREAT PERCEPTIONS

With the end of the Cold War, decision makers in the United States quickly became aware that the new strategic environment presented a broader set of challenges than those of the previous era. Director for National Intelligence James Woolsey noted in his 1993 Senate confirmation hearing that the number of threats to American interests had increased and become more complex, observing that "Yes, we have slain a large dragon. But we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes. And in many ways, the dragon was easier to keep track of" (Jehl 1993). Even though most of the Soviet ballistic missile fleet conveyed to the Russian Federation, which retained the ability to credibly threaten the United States with an overwhelming and catastrophic nuclear attack, the perceived need to contain a constant existential threat to the homeland vanished along with the Soviet Union. The U.S. could now focus on less consequential threats that proved more challenging to contain and on which good intelligence was more difficult to obtain.

PERSISTENT DUALITY: But great power worries were not entirely gone even in the early 1990s, as the Clinton administration recognized that China's political and military trajectory would likely eventually solidify into a regional challenger in Asia. Thus, even as the United States became more active in dealing with Woolsey's "jungle of poisonous snakes," it pursued a hedging strategy with regard to a new dragon: China. The military requirements for balancing or containing a regional power in Asia differed

markedly from those needed to conduct counterterrorism, stability and reconstruction operations or humanitarian interventions, setting up a persistent tension in U.S. defense policy: prepare for high intensity interstate conflict in East Asia or stability operations in what the Bush administration would later call the "arc of instability" that stretched from Northern Africa through the Middle East to Central and South Asia. The Clinton administration flirted with the latter throughout its eight years, with operations in the Balkans, Central Asia and Africa, but it was the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that understandably caused the definitive shift toward the asymmetric side of the conflict spectrum.

The attacks on 9/11 served to remind the U.S. of the tremendous political and sociological impact of limited, non-existential threats. An attack that resulted in anything similar to loss of the two buildings in New York, part of the Pentagon and a commercial aircraft over the skies of Pennsylvania constituted an unacceptable risk. Due to patterns of globalization and the democratization of weapons technology, non-state actors such as transnational terrorist groups could conceivably obtain, transport, and detonate a weapon of mass destruction resulting in truly horrific numbers of casualties. In a similar fashion, small states that appeared to threaten U.S. interests or act in ways that the international community found disconcerting, also became more worrisome due to their perceived ability to launch a limited attack on the U.S. homeland. These so-called rogue states – which have in the past included Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and North Korea – were of concern during the Cold War and remained a threat to the U.S. during the 1990s. The potential for these states to collude with terrorist organizations heightened U.S. concerns after 2001 and those concerns have been compounded as Iran and North Korea have marched steadily toward a useable long-range nuclear capability. These nuclear risks were among the factors that led the Bush administration to invade Iraq in 2003 and the Obama administration to prioritize nuclear proliferation during his first year in office.

CYBER ON THE RISE: The modernization and democratization of violence has combined with the interconnectedness of globalization to minimize the value of the natural oceanic buffers enjoyed by the United States. Cyber threats headed the 2013 overview presented by the U.S. intelligence community, during which DIA chief Michael Flynn remarked that cyber attacks represented the most dangerous threat to U.S. security today. Illustrating this point, the *Washington Post* reported in April 2013 on a study by government and industry analysts who examined 120 cases of government cyber espionage last year and found that China was responsible for 96 percent of them (Timberg 2013). The insatiable thirst for networked technological solutions has made the United States especially vulnerable to cyber attacks from state and non-state actors that can harm nearly every facet of daily life, starting with an under-defended power grid but potentially including government and financial institutions as well.

REGIONAL INSTABILITY REMAINS: As global communications and media outlets increase awareness of diplomatic crises and humanitarian disasters throughout the globe, political pressures have grown for the U.S. to react – particularly when a substantial portion of U.S. policymaking elites believe that the nation has a unique responsibility to promote democratic ideals along with peace and stability. In less politically stable regions across Africa, the Middle East and Asia, environmental factors and demographic trends combine with weak governmental structures to produce conflict, mass migrations, and radicalization by terror groups. The so-called Arab Spring has in many respects made an unstable region even more so. The United States has consistently viewed these regions as presenting threats to regional stability as well as its own security. The projected effects of global climate change will serve to exacerbate existing risk factors, creating greater water and food shortages, increasing the likelihood of mass migrations and the potential for conflict or radicalization.

The United States has, since the end of the Cold War, exhibited a fairly consistent understanding of the threat environment. Deterring and containing a high intensity interstate conflict with China – requiring a large but relatively inactive military force – simmered under the surface but never constituted the

principle organizing factor for the nation's security policy, whereas interventions to address asymmetric and destabilizing threats became the primary activity of the U.S. military. The Clinton administration paid some attention to China and actively engaged on a range of asymmetric threats, but also exhibited some insular tendencies. The Bush administration greatly increased its focus on asymmetrical threats while de-emphasizing China, and the insular tendencies disappeared. During the Obama administration, the asymmetrical threats have been sufficiently weakened and are being gradually de-emphasized, while the interstate challenge from China is becoming the predominate focus as other insular trends emerge.

UNRESOLVED THREATS: Most noteworthy about this description is the fact that none of the threats has disappeared or been completely resolved. While the U.S. shifts its focus to East Asia, the same political, social, demographic, and environmental trends that worried policymakers in the 1990s and 2000s remain and, according to the most recent intelligence estimates, are worsening. There is no reason to believe that U.S. threat perceptions will remain static on the threat intensity spectrum. China's power projection capacity will remain regional for the foreseeable future and perhaps over the longer term, too, while the U.S. ability to project power globally may be reduced but will likely persist. At some point, an acceptable equilibrium may be achieved between the two powers, whereas the sub-state threats at the other end of the spectrum may continue to worsen.

TRENDS IN GRAND STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Bush administration was strongly influenced by the 9/11 attacks and formulated an aggressive response combining wide-ranging military counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations with strong rhetoric promoting freedom and democratic principles. The instruments of national power utilized to pursue its grand strategy relied heavily on military force, focusing its efforts on terrorist organizations and the rogue states that assisted them. A deep-seated skepticism of institutional arrangements that could limit U.S. freedom of action led to bilateral and coalition-type arrangements that eventually drew criticism from the country's traditional European allies. The Bush White House had some success with regional coalition building on the Asia-Pacific Rim and for a number of years enjoyed reduced tensions with Russia, but its overall diplomatic approach was a source of considerable consternation among its allies and potential adversaries. The United States pursued unsustainable fiscal policies that, when combined with a domestically instigated financial crisis, created massive budget deficits and added trillions of dollars to the national debt. The administration made a number of strategic adjustments during its second term in office, toning down its tough rhetoric and placing more emphasis on cooperation and dialogue, but the strategic framework remained more or less intact.

The Obama administration inherited two ongoing conflicts, an economic crisis, and an international community at odds with U.S. policy. The new administration adopted a more conciliatory and cooperative rhetorical tone and made significant adjustments to some policies, but the overall substance of U.S. security policy remained surprisingly consistent. The drawdown of forces in Iraq proceeded as planned, allowing the administration to surge troops into Afghanistan in order to facilitate the eventual U.S. withdrawal from the conflict. Notably, Obama has expanded the use of targeted killings via unmanned aerial vehicles and special operations missions for global counterterrorism efforts. Obama's strategy has sought to reestablish America's global diplomatic leadership role, facilitate the construction of regional security architectures underwritten by the United States, and ensure access to all regions of the world and overall freedom of action, especially in Asia. International partnerships and institutions are perceived to be valuable tools by the Obama administration, but similar to its predecessor has yet to demonstrate any willingness to bind Washington to arrangements that would limit its strategic flexibility in any meaningful way. The administration reached out diplomatically to China, Russia and Iran – but with varying and often unsatisfactory results.

As the Obama administration began its second term, a number of grand strategic trends were discernible. Some of them were continuations of trends begun

during the Bush years or before, while others are recent modifications to U.S. policy. As is the case with all such trends, they are not without exceptions and are subject to change. Nevertheless, the combination of system-level factors, along with engrained U.S. perceptions of threats and its own international role, increases the likelihood that these trends are robust.

LIGHT FOOTPRINT APPROACH: The Obama administration has pursued a policy of reducing U.S. troop commitments in overseas conflicts, concluding the nation's involvement in Iraq, and surging troops in Afghanistan to stabilize the situation to a sufficient degree ("Afghan good enough") so that indigenous forces can assume security responsibilities after 2014 with a small residual U.S. force. In Libya, the United States played a supporting role through the deployment of enabling assets, and has so far resisted political pressure to become involved in Syria. Throughout Africa and the greater Middle East, the United States employs unmanned aerial vehicles (referred to a UAVs or "drones") and special operations forces in tailored counterterrorism missions, rather than full-scale stability operations.

The light footprint approach relies on building partner capacity through training and cooperative structures, so that regional allies are able to deal more independently with internal security threats before they become regional ones and necessitate greater levels of assistance by the United States. Similarly, the Obama administration is encouraging the formation of a global network of regional security structures that will have the capacity to deter aggression in the region, handle security threats that arise and provide political and strategic stability. While the NATO alliance is a unique collective security arrangement in Europe, it also acts as a regional security framework through which security issues can be handled. Less comprehensive but still potentially effective frameworks are forming in the Middle East, East Asia, and elsewhere. The continued growth of such frameworks will allow the U.S. to continue toward a "light footprint" approach. Nevertheless, the approach has been criticized for having too few military assets to safeguard American interests in regions such as the Middle East, and conflicts like Syria clearly call into question the ability of regional frameworks to handle crises (Sanger 2012b, Rachman 2013).

A combination of factors contributes to this trend. There is a realization after experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that military force cannot accomplish many of the desired political objectives required to provide security and sovereignty in weak states with vast ungoverned regions that might be utilized by non-state actors such as terrorist organizations or transnational criminal enterprises. Strategic access to, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities within, those regions through solid military-to-military cooperation can allow U.S. and its partners to degrade the capacity of such actors to operate effectively. Additionally, there is a greater appreciation of the cost-benefit calculus to direct involvement, both in terms of blood and treasure. These attitudes are easily changed, however. Two other factors are key: finances and technology.

The domestic economic situation is showing signs of improvement, but the fundamental mechanics of its fiscal situation remain unaltered: a litany of budgetary demands driven by a mixture of structural forces and political realities. These include the significant and growing entitlements burden from the ageing "baby boomer" population, rising health care costs, an unwillingness to reduce popular spending programs and a hesitancy to meaningfully increase revenues, the popularity of large defense expenditures, and the persistent (though shifting) expectation that U.S. power will be deployed globally. Minor adjustments have already been made to most of these elements, but not to a degree sufficient to alter the general trajectory of the nation's dire fiscal situation.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to invest in technological solutions such as unmanned aerial vehicles that enhance its ability to conduct global ISR, as well as disrupt the capabilities of non-state actors and liquidate their leadership through targeted killings. Continued investments in a conventional prompt global strike capability are another sign of operational flexibility, whereby the U.S. can project power without exposing its personnel to additional

risk and without sustaining political costs. Another power projection capability – though it is rarely viewed in this manner – is ballistic missile defense, which will ostensibly allow the U.S. to continue to operate in regions where state or non-state actors wielding ballistic missiles might otherwise be able to threaten U.S. military assets.

GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF STRATEGIC RISK: The Bush administration began its "war on terror" with the objective of "rolling back" and eliminating (to the degree possible) transnational terrorism, and counterterrorism operations became the primary prism framing its security policy. This approach was adjusted and de-emphasized somewhat during Bush's second term, however. The Obama administration, having benefitted from its predecessor's aggressive counterterrorism campaign, viewed terrorism as a persistent but controllable threat that could be managed together with the rest of the nation's security interests. The perceived underlying root causes of terrorism and radicalization – political instability, repressive regimes that create resource shortages, mass migrations that leave large numbers of young, unemployed people crowded into small spaces with few basic commodities and limited government services, making them vulnerable to radicalization – were viewed by the Bush administration as a governance issue for which the spread of democracy would contribute to America's security while remaining true to its ideals.

The Obama administration has been forced to choose between traditional security interests in the volatile "arc of instability" and its liberal ideology, most poignantly during the so-called Arab Spring. The longstanding U.S. relationship with the Mubarak regime in Egypt created an intractable diplomatic situation for the administration, as did extensive protests in Bahrain, the Gulf state hosting the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. The protracted civil war in Syria has also tested U.S. interests – the influx of refugees places political pressure on its ally Jordan and the conflict creates tensions on its other borders with U.S. allies Turkey, Israel and Iraq. The administration has gone to great lengths and resisted strong domestic pressure to avoid deeper involvement in the highly complex conflict. The breadth and complexity of the Arab uprisings not only took the U.S. somewhat by surprise, but also left the administration with few real options for shaping outcomes in the region. As the strategic landscape is shuffled, the potential for continued unrest and new safe havens for terrorist groups remains substantial.

Therefore, the lack of any real diplomatic or military options that could be helpful in creating a more orderly situation in the greater Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa resulted in two trends already clearly visible: greater risk acceptance and a light footprint approach. The U.S. will likely continue to work with the few regional partners available, providing military training to partner governments and conducting small incursions with limited forces to target specific terrorist groups and contain the threat. Any broad-based governance programs such as the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account will receive less priority, as will extended diplomatic outreach. The "transformational diplomacy" efforts focused on outreach to local populations in smaller cities outside the capitals, launched under Secretary Rice and continued (though not necessarily in name) under Secretary Clinton, may have been dealt a final blow with the attacks on the diplomatic compound in Benghazi that resulted in the deaths of four Americans. The attacks cast attention on the need to enhance the security of U.S. diplomats abroad – a requirement that will necessarily result in a retreat to more centralized and well-fortified compounds.

RENEWED INTEREST IN GREAT POWER BALANCING: Perhaps the most recognizable trend developing over the past four years was embodied in the administration's most recent strategic document, the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance: namely the process of rebalancing U.S. military forces toward the Asia-Pacific region. This is the one region that will most definitely not exhibit the "light footprint" trend occurring in other parts of the globe. Concerns about China's anti-access/area denial capabilities in East Asia have been viewed as threatening Washington's interest in retaining the ability to operate freely in the region and credibly meet their security commitments to allies such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia. The primary objective for U.S. policymakers appears to be a desire to maintain a per-

sistent presence in the region, ensure the security of valuable shipping routes, and have the ability to counter any attempts by the Chinese to pressure or coerce U.S. allies in the region through the use of military force. Due to the geographic characteristics of the region, naval and air power will be of great importance, and a 2010 AirSea Battle study from a Washington think tank, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, appears to have been particularly influential in shaping the administration's thinking (Van Tol 2010).

The shift toward a greater relative U.S. military presence in the Pacific has occurred gradually over the past several decades, as noted earlier, but the rebalancing has taken a more prominent role in discussions over force size and composition. Just as Secretary Gates worked to institutionalize the counterinsurgency and reconstruction missions within the Defense Department during the final years of the Bush administration, the Asia rebalancing appears to have taken over as the primary organizing principle for the military. This entails a much heavier emphasis on technologically advanced systems able to operate in contested battlespace, such as stealth aircraft, conventionally armed ballistic missile submarines, and long-range strike capabilities. Due to the much-discussed potential for the development of an anti-ship ballistic missile, a serious debate is underway regarding the future of the aircraft carrier as the definitive tool for U.S. naval power projection. It should be noted that these assets will predominately be deployed to deter aggression by the Chinese, ensure strategic access to U.S. forces, provide reassurance to allies and enable U.S. participation in joint regional training missions with allies and partners. Deterring a high intensity interstate conflict will result in routine deployments to establish "presence" and therefore will remain operational in the region, but (hopefully) static in terms of their actual use in combat. The limited deployment of smaller military units in conflict situations will therefore likely occur in other regions such as the greater Middle East and Africa, when regional security frameworks have been unable to resolve crises or cope with growing threats. Even as the United States shifts its focus to deterring high intensity conflict in Asia, the underlying trends that create security threats in ungoverned and unstable regions will continue to fester. It would be unreasonable to assume that any administration, even one as intent on "leading from behind" as President Obama's, will be able to completely ignore these regions – the threats remain real and the trend lines are negative. The potential for another substantial military engagement in the greater Middle East, Africa or Central Asia will depend largely upon the ability of the United States and its partners to keep security threats in check through special operations forces and drones and leverage bilateral and multilateral relationships in order to maintain regional stability.

CONCLUSION

The global security environment has become even more complex than was the case at the end of the Cold War, leaving policymakers with even more threats to monitor and a less effective set of tools for dealing with those threats. The United States has long had a tendency to favor the use of military force as a policy tool, and this trend is unlikely to completely reverse itself even as the current strategic and fiscal climate suggests a pause in U.S. military interventions. Even so, the underlying variables that drive the security threats facing the United States in most parts of the world are not solvable with the application of military force due to political, social, demographic, and environmental forces at work. The U.S. military may, along with their regional partners, be able to keep some the more dire consequences of these changes from disrupting regional security, but will not be able to 'solve' the problems either with diplomatic or military instruments.

The personal involvement of President Obama in policymaking contributes to a greater level of uncertainty regarding the near-term future of U.S. security policy. The current administration has an

appreciation for the complexity in the global security landscape, but its successor may be more willing to accept operational risks. Nevertheless, the next administration may also have fewer options for deploying forces as the current trends unfold. The substantial increase in U.S. ground forces that seemed almost certain to occur during the transition from Bush to Obama disappeared, replaced by a reduction in those forces and an increased focus on naval and air forces. A large-scale intervention force may again require activation of reserve forces and would therefore raise the political threshold. The reduced capacity of the State Department lowers the ability of U.S. to work in a preventative fashion within at-risk regions and increases the likelihood of instability and crisis. The U.S. economic situation will undoubtedly improve, but rising entitlement costs will continue to grow and budgetary pressures are likely to persist beyond the current "sequester" arrangement that requires automatic cuts to many sectors of the budget.

The rebalancing toward Asia will likely continue as China continues its military buildup. The channeling of military assets into the region appears likely to create a classic security spiral as each side reacts to the deployments of the other, until some type of stable relationship is attained that both sides deem satisfactory. The deployment of high-intensity conflict assets will be predominately for deterrence and assurance purposes, and "shooting war" conflict scenarios are unlikely to occur. Regional threats in the greater Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia may continue to grow, however, and force the U.S. to remain involved in some capacity – testing the newly developed 'light footprint' approach.

U.S. DEFENSE POLICY PLANNING PROCESSES

While the Obama administration garnered attention with its 2012 strategic guidance document, the strategy remains conceptual in nature until its intent is reflected in the actual force posture of the United States. Donald Rumsfeld famously remarked in 2004 that "you go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have" (Schmitt 2004). Even though decisionmakers are free to make choices regarding the use of military force based on strategic and/or political calculations, these future decisions are necessarily framed and sometimes limited by the actual capabilities at their disposal, about which decisions have already been made. During the Bush administration, it was evident that the U.S. lacked the ability to fully prosecute two military campaigns and the Pentagon resorted to lengthy deployments, involuntary retentions and lowered recruitment standards in order to maintain troop levels. Despite these adaptations, the U.S. was still unable to devote the necessary manpower to Afghanistan while fully engaged in Iraq, and the military was routinely described as "frayed" or "strained." Troop end strength therefore constituted a conscious decision that played a significant role in the implementation of U.S. defense policy. Similarly, decisions made today regarding specific weapons platforms and other military assets will create tangible limits to policymakers in the future.

Obviously, defense policy choices are influenced by a great number of factors, with strategic planning representing only one such variable. This chapter briefly examines the driving factors behind three sets of defense policies – military capabilities requirements, force posture, and force doctrines – in order to better understand the decisions behind

- what type of military assets are deemed necessary;
- where those forces are deployed and in what amounts; and
- decision making about doctrines governing their use.

Despite Rumsfeld's comment about extant versus desired military capabilities, the fact of the matter is that military planners are constantly evaluating future force requirements. The perennial question of "how much is enough?" can be answered in a variety of ways, depending on any combination of assumptions about threat perceptions and trends, U.S. security interests, and the role of military force in securing them. But while the preceding discussion focused on how the civilian leadership determines whether military power may be necessary, the processes by which the U.S. military make decisions about which assets to field and in what amounts are more complex and, in many cases, the center of gravity often lies outside the White House. Nevertheless, the impetus for military planning regarding force structures stems from the political leadership within the administration and begins with the National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Because the acquisition and fielding of military capabilities is such a time consuming and expensive prospect, decisions regarding force structure have lasting and consequential effects. The long lead time required to develop weapons systems or train and equip additional personnel encourages decision makers to attempt to anticipate future requirements, often at the expense of current needs. Meanwhile, unanticipated crises regularly occur, for which policymakers may determine that some type of military response is required. During the Cold War, preparations for a large-scale, high-intensity conventional conflict with the Soviet Union took place alongside a build-up of U.S. strategic forces to balance the Soviet arsenal. Planning included force sizes sufficient to conduct two major theatre wars in addition to a smaller contingency operation, or, in other words, two and a half wars.

This dominated force planning until the end of the Cold War, when the George H.W. Bush administration and, in particular, JCS chairman Colin Powell, devised a construct that would ensure a global presence while also achieving some reductions so that a 'peace dividend' could be realized. Powell's "Base Force" concept involved a 25 percent reduction in force structure and the evolution of the U.S. military from a more stationary garrison force relying on large fixed bases, to a light and flexible expeditionary force able to deploy more rapidly. The incoming Clinton administration was focused on domestic policy and conducted what would become the first QDR-like process, the Bottom-Up Review, released in October 1993. It called for additional cuts to personnel but overseas forces remained close to the levels proscribed by Powell's Base Force, due to the anticipated need to engage in low intensity operations (Hicks and Brannen 2010).

Additionally, the administration instituted what became known as an "acquisition holiday" after the Reagan administration's military build-up in the 1980s, which was itself a reaction to the post-Vietnam drawdown that had resulted in what many believed to be a "hollow force" by the late 1970s. The George W. Bush administration, with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld taking a particularly active role at the Pentagon, accelerated the military's evolution toward an expeditionary and flexible force, initiated a Global Defense Posture Review upon which force structure and basing decisions could be made.

FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNING

Force structure planning over the past several decades has followed a somewhat linear process of decision making regarding force size, beginning with studies that evaluate the strategic requirements of the United States and the forces necessary to meet those needs. Obviously, assumptions about force sizing have not always been correct. The public disagreement between General Eric Shinseki and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in late 2002 over troop requirements for Operation Iraqi Freedom – in which Wolfowitz argued successfully for lower troop numbers but Shinseki's rough estimate for a much larger residual force was ultimately vindicated – illustrated the tensions between civilian and military perspectives on force planning (Fitzsimmons 2006). Further, the fallacy of utilizing a broad

force planning construct anchored in the ability to wage two major regional conflicts (or contingencies) simultaneously was clearly apparent during the Bush administration, as the U.S. military struggled to wage conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the force was routinely described as strained.

Gauging the future military requirements of the United States is clearly a challenging task and fraught with uncertainty surrounding the multitude of unknown mission parameters. Nevertheless, a basic format can be discerned. Prior to the release of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, scholars Kenneth McKenzie and Michèle Flournoy – then a research professor at the National Defense University – suggested a more formal methodology for force sizing and described four distinct approaches (Flournoy 2001):

THREAT SCENARIO: Force structure is based on specific threats identified by the intelligence community and is therefore heavily based on developing scenarios from which force requirements can be extrapolated. The disadvantage of this approach lies in fielding a force that is less adaptable to unanticipated events or long-term threats.

REGIONAL MISSION: Force structure is based on military requirements in each of the geographical regions from the Unified Command Plan, often better known by their acronyms: Europe (EUCOM); Asia and Pacific (PACOM); Middle East and Central Asia (CENTCOM); Central and South America (SOUTHCOM); and the continental U.S. (NORTHCOM). This approach would identify peacetime engagement and presence requirements as well as contingency operations.

GENERIC MISSIONS: Force structure is based on generic missions generated by a particular strategy and its priorities, such as homeland defense, major regional conflicts, or overseas presence. Force sizing is closely tied to the strategic guidance, but may be inflexible regarding unforeseen missions.

FUTURE CAPABILITIES: Force structure is based on fielding capabilities needed to handle future threats based on the identification of the likely future security landscape. Forces are sized to deal with the most likely scenarios, but retain flexibility as a hedge against developments that are deemed less possible. The model may emphasize future capabilities at the cost of near-term needs.

This typology of force planning models clearly doesn't reflect actual U.S. planning processes, but elements of each of these four approaches can be easily identified in strategy documents and other sources describing force sizing considerations.

Defense Department official Kathleen Hicks, veteran of several QDR iterations, detailed the latest review's force sizing deliberations in the pages of *Joint Forces Quarterly*. She identified three trends in U.S. force planning that informed the 2010 QDR. Echoing the typology above, the first trend was the need to balance current operational requirements with the need to develop forces for future contingencies – making sure sufficient institutional attention was paid to current conflicts while preparing for future ones. The second trend identified by Hicks was a greater appreciation for the unpredictability of future operations. Related to this was the third and final trend, a realization that "contingency operations" are becoming increasingly difficult to categorize and might better be understood as hybrid operations in which adversaries might "move quickly from one 'type' of warfare to another, often converging in time and place" (Hicks and Brannen 2010).

Hicks described a force planning process that considered both near-term force sizing needs from five to seven years and long-term needs from seven to twenty years. By leveraging past experience and considering the components of the national security strategy, planners projected U.S. force structure requirements for the next several decades. The 2010 QDR proposes four key objectives: prevailing in current conflicts; preventing and deterring further conflict; preparing to defeat adversaries and succeed in a range of scenarios; and preserve and enhance the force. The QDR authors then tested or "red-teamed" the resulting force construct by considering a range of other scenarios through simulations, modeling and wargaming.

As part of the congressionally mandated QDR process, the legislation calls for an independent review as an additional safeguard providing an outside perspective on the conclusions reached in the QDR document. The duties of the Independent Panel included

> examining the force sizing construct used in the 2010 QDR to distinguish enhancements related to near-term threats, review the QDR process to determine necessary and enduring capability enhancements and the capacity of forces needed to meet long-term threats, and assess (against the current Department of Defense program) resource requirements for optional force-structure enhancements. (Hadley and Perry 2010: 48)

The panel's findings were much discussed, as were the conclusions of the panel following the previous iteration of the QDR, and contributed to the overall discussion surrounding U.S. force structure requirements.

The QDR is far from the only significant policy planning endeavor. Former U.S. Army officer Nathan Freier, who was instrumental in the writing of the 2005 National Defense Strategy, recently proffered a detailed description of the drafting process. Reportedly, upon reviewing a draft of the 2005 National Military Strategy that had emanated from inside the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld questioned why his office was not more involved in issuing statements of policy, particularly given the principle of civilian control of the military. It was decided that a National Defense Strategy – which naturally enough sits a level above the NMS in the hierarchy of strategic policy documents – would be written and released prior to the issuance of the 2005 NMS. According to Freier, civilian defense officials regarded this as an opportunity to "reassert civilian primacy over defense strategy," adjust defense policy given the momentous changes since 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and influence public debate regarding strategy prior to the release of the 2006 QDR (Freier 2012: 97). As Freier relates,

> Initially, two staff officers (one military, one civilian) in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) were tasked to review and revise QDR 01's strategy to more fully account for the conditions that had changed since 9/11. Thus, NDS 05 was originally intended to be an update, not a rewrite ... the strategy team recommended a 'back to the drawing board' approach early in its initial review of QDR 01. Given both political considerations and limited time, there was naturally some reluctance for a complete rewrite at higher levels. However, again the author understands that the SecDef himself endorsed the idea of wholesale revision when the option was briefed to him. (Freier 2012: 98)

The resulting document represented a significant conceptual shift in U.S. strategic thinking, particularly given the fact that the 2001 QDR had primarily been drafted prior to the September 2001 terrorist attacks and the dramatic shift they precipitated in U.S. While the circumstances and the timing appeared driven by bureaucratic and institutional motives, the content of the document itself was based upon a considered and earnest evaluation of the strategic environment, along with the nation's defense priorities and interests.

Sometimes even more mundane bureaucratic and institutional factors are instrumental in shaping force structure and acquisition policies. For example, the experiences of the U.S. Marine Corps in World War Two – in particular the lack of air cover during the battle of Guadalcanal after the U.S. Navy withdrew their aircraft carriers – left an indelible mark upon the USMC and became the primary driver behind the creation and maintenance of the Corps' own air power capability, first with helicopters and then with the Harrier jump jets capable of vertical/short take-off and landing (V/STOL). This institutional demand eventually led to the inclusion of a V/STOL capability included in the multi-service F35 Joint Strike Fighter, a significant design feature that some argue has compromised the aircraft's performance (Axe 2013).

FORCE POSTURE PLANNING

Decisions regarding U.S. force posture are, understandably, closely related to deliberations on force structure, but are not completely interlocking. Not only must the United States determine the overall size of its military forces, but also where these forces are to be located. A 2004 Defense Department report defined the U.S. global defense posture as "the size, location, types, and capabilities of its forward military forces. It constitutes a fundamental element of our ability to project power and undertake military actions beyond our borders" (Feith 2004: 2). The processes by which decisions are taken regarding the placement of these forces can have strategic consequences, as the most recent shifts in U.S. defense policy have illustrated.

In a manner similar to the force structure inherited from the Cold War legacy, so too was an expansive global network of military bases and installations. According to a comprehensive report released by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), U.S. posture during the Cold War was characterized by

> [l]arge numbers of combat forces along an established and well-defined defensive perimeter. These forces were sustained by and through a robust theatre logistics and basing infrastructure. As a result, the requirements to project intact, ready-to-fight U.S. combat units into contested theatres was replaced by a requirement to deliver reinforcements rapidly to forward-based, ready-to-fight combat garrisons. (Krepinevich and Work 2007: 114)

Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet Union also erased the principal organizing logic behind the nation's global force posture. Conceptualizations for new basing structures were explored during the early 1990s discussion of Powell's Base Force concept, during Les Aspin's Bottom-Up Review from 1993, as a result of the aforementioned basing report issued in 2004, and the three post-Cold War rounds of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process – in 1993, 1995 and 2005. In general, the gradual reorganization of overseas facilities has largely stemmed from strategically anchored analyses emanating from the Department of Defense, whereas the base closure processes have, not unexpectedly, involved a much greater degree of domestic political engagement and influence.

Over the past two decades, the QDR process has often served as a conduit for strategic thinking on global force posture and the document has acted as a harbinger of change regarding its organizational principles. Additionally, the congressionally mandated independent reviews of the QDR process have also been a source of input into the ongoing discussion of global posture. Finally, a number of studies have been conducted by the Defense Department, such as the 2004 Global Defense Posture Review (GDPR). But do such reports and reviews make any impact on implemented policy? From these analyses come both sweeping and incremental changes to the global defense posture. As one RAND study observed, "although many of the 2004 GDPR's initiatives were successfully implemented, that process has proceeded slowly and has been fraught with complications and setbacks.... Nevertheless, as a result of the 2004 GDPR, [the Defense Department] today thinks differently about posture" (Pettyjohn 2012: 93)

The U.S. global force posture has undergone three important shifts since the end of the Cold War – first during the Clinton administration as the drawdown from Europe and elsewhere codified the end of the bipolar balance of power contest; then during the George W. Bush administration as it adjusted to a more global expeditionary force tailored to counterterrorism; and finally during the Obama administration as it began a "rebalancing" toward the Asia-Pacific region. Notably, each of these was precipitated by shifts in the international security landscape and constituted a strategic top-down adjustment by Defense Department decision making, but was prompted each time by serious and intense debates within the policy community on the future direction of the force. As mentioned above, the processes linked to domestic base closures stand in contrast to this, following a much less discernible pattern due to the vagaries of domestic political constellations and internal bargaining.

MILITARY ACQUISITIONS

Unsurprisingly, this genuflection regarding the conceptual force structure and posture requirements often stands in stark contrast to the processes involved in deciding precisely which capabilities are to be acquired to satisfy those requirements. Purchasing or developing cost effective and reliable weapon systems and other military equipment ranks among the most important processes carried out by a defense department, but acquisition policies have regularly attracted criticism. In 1862, during the height of the Civil War, the House of Representatives released a 1,100 page report on corruption and mismanagement in the War Department, noting purchases of diseased horses, rotten food, and weapons that did not work. Over one hundred studies have been conducted on defense acquisition practices in the United States since the end of World War Two and significant challenges remain unsolved despite a series of reforms (Schwartz 2010).

Generally, a weapon system is created to fulfill a particular need or "requirement" for the military, often based on strategic guidance found in the National Military Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, or the Quadrennial Defense Review. Once a need is identified, a three-step process usually follows: the detailed requirements are identified by the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCID); resources and budgeting is organized through the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBE); and the development and purchasing are conducted through the Defense Acquisition System.[6] Platforms are obviously developed or purchased outside this framework – and certain acquisition programs never progress beyond the development stage to production and operational use – but such exceptions may be best understood in comparison to the formal processes currently in place.

The JCIDS was created in 2003 as the U.S. military shifted from a threat-based to capabilities-based approach for determining force structure requirements; it emphasizes "jointness" and collaboration among the services rather than the more proprietary departmental approaches. In this first step of the acquisition process, a Capabilities Based Assessment is conducted to identify gaps in military capabilities and suggests either material (such as a weapon system) or non-material (new training or doctrinal adjustments) to correct them. If a material need such as a weapon system is identified, an Initial Capabilities Document is prepared which justifies a particular solution. This ICD will then be approved by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) after it validates the capabilities needed for a specific mission, the existing capability gap, and the need to address that gap.

The PPBE follows a two-year cycle, whereby the planning for even years (such as FY2014) are referred to as the "on-year" process and odd years as "off-years." During the on-years, the Defense Department drafts a complete six-year budget cycle known as the Future-Years Defense Program. As its name suggests, the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System consists of four separate activities corresponding to the acquisition process for a specific military system. During the planning phase, the PPBE analyzes the established capability gap and publishes its findings in the Joint Program Guidance document which guides the various DOD entities in proposing acquisition programs. During the programming phase, a Program Objective Memorandum (POM) is prepared which details the missions/objectives and budget of the proposed weapon system; the memoranda are then integrated into one of the eleven Defense Programs.[7] During the budgeting phase (occurring while the programming phase is ongoing), the proposed budget for the system is reviewed and a Program Budget Decision is issued. Finally, the execution phase (occurring while the programming and budget phases remain ongoing) examines the implementation of the acquisition project and compares it to performance benchmarks.

The Defense Acquisition System is the process governing the development and purchase of military systems and utilizes a system of three "milestones" to manage individual acquisition programs. When milestone A is passed, technologies necessary for the program are developed and tested in an operational

and relevant environment, and prototypes may also be built by competing industrial teams during this phase. When an affordable program can be identified and a viable manufacturing process demonstrated, the program advances past milestone B: the engineering and manufacturing phase. Most acquisition programs actually begin at this milestone, for which mature technologies, approved requirements, and full funding are necessary. Programs must complete a Post-preliminary Design Review and a Post Critical Design Review in order to pass milestone C and begin the final phase in the acquisition process: production and deployment. It is during this final phase that Low-Rate Initial Production is authorized and models are produced for Initial Operational Test and Evaluation prior to achieving Full Operational Capability (Adams and Williams 2010; Schwartz 2010).

Clearly, there is a gaping hole in the procurement story that has yet to be mentioned: the role of domestic political actors and defense contractors in the acquisitions process. Many have written of an "iron triangle" linking the Defense Department, Congress, and private contractors. Significant amounts of money are spent by defense contractors developing new products to sell to the military and additional millions are spent on advertising in order to position their products for DoD purchasers. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that despite the massive size of the U.S. military and the constant pressure to develop new systems as well as modernize existing equipment, there exists the robust set of processes roughly outlined above.

The effects of the "iron triangle," or what President Dwight Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex," are often revealed when attempting to cancel poorly performing programs. The initiation of particular weapons systems programs based solely on domestic political considerations may certainly have occurred (some argue that ballistic missile defense is such an example, while others, including this author, dispute this), but more prevalent are examples of weapons systems legitimately developed to satisfy a particular strategic requirement but which fail to deliver (on specifications or cost) as promised, yet remain in production due to domestic pressures (Mayer 2013).

FORCE DOCTRINES

The combination of decisions regarding military acquisitions, force structure, and force posture provides the United States with a particular combination of military capabilities of a particular size and character deployed to particular places across the globe. The piece of the puzzle yet to be addressed is the set of doctrines governing its use. The civilian leadership, and more specifically the president as commander in chief, makes the ultimate decision regarding when and where military force will be utilized. One way the Defense Department constantly prepares for deployment is through the development of conceptual doctrines that guide the service branches in practicing their craft. Doctrinal developments have implications beyond the U.S. military as well, being quite influential to allies and partners that train with U.S. forces either bilaterally or in a NATO context.

On a strategic level, nuclear weapons doctrines must be separated from the warfighting guidelines and best practices that steer the U.S. military in an operational environment. The precise wording of U.S. nuclear policies can have important signaling effects to allies and potential adversaries regarding the nation's deterrence posture. It is therefore closely managed by the elected civilian leadership and only rarely adjusted. The doctrines pertaining to military operations in the field have been slowly evolving from the large-scale conventional conflict scenarios during the Cold War to a much broader range of missions.

Over the past decade, the U.S. military has engaged in large-scale, high-intensity maneuver warfare, massive security and stability operations, widespread special operations missions, deployment of assets for strategic deterrence, shows of force and military exercises, military to military training missions, humanitarian assistance, and a host of other specialized deployments. On a strategic level, the military must determine around which of these mission sets

U.S. forces should be structured as it is impractical to prepare and train for such a diverse set of missions requiring dissimilar equipment and tactics.

On an operational level, however, contingency planning must be performed and 'best practices' collected from prior engagements, such as the counterinsurgency manual FM 3-24 from December 2006. More recently, the creation of an AirSea Battle office within the Pentagon appears to be a dedicated effort to develop a new doctrinal approach for organizing air and naval assets in anti-access environments. Increasingly, military planners are acknowledging the complex and unpredictable nature of the international security environment – and are searching for doctrinal approaches to cope with so-called "hybrid" warfare scenarios.

But will the U.S. military be ready for such challenges? Much of the discussion in Washington surrounding the recent budget-cutting process of sequestration focused on force readiness. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff defines strategic readiness as

> The ability of the joint force to perform missions and provide capabilities to achieve strategic objectives as identified in strategic level documents (e.g., National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and NMS). Assessing strategic readiness requires a global perspective to account for demands between regional and functional responsibilities. (CJCS 2010)

Readiness can be divided into three categories: personnel, training, and equipment. The choices outlined above – including force structure, posture, and doctrine – can have a direct impact on the strategic readiness of the force. The number of ground troops affects overall capacity to maintain a constant presence in stabilization operations, the network of installations from which these troops can be transported and supported, and the training provided to them before the operation can all be crucial to its success. These variables may therefore be influential in discussions regarding the ability of the military to undertake such an operation and therefore may influence political decision making.

The "American way of war" has gradually evolved during the post-Cold War period, but warfighting doctrine remains firmly anchored in the utilization of advanced technology for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) purposes as well as for kinetic effects. Such technologies are costly – as are health care and pension benefits for military personnel. Budget decisions may be increasingly based on strategic prioritizations about force structure and posture taken at the civilian level, but in ways that will require adjustments at the doctrinal level in order to maintain readiness.

CONCLUSION

Decisions regarding force structures, posture, and doctrines have the potential to frame and limit the range of military capabilities, and therefore the strategic and political options, available to policymakers in the future. The processes by which both force structure planning constructs and U.S. global posture have been formulated generally reflects a fairly top-down pattern of decision making that has taken into account the global security environment and U.S. strategic interests. Despite significant global shifts, however, changes to force structure and posture have occurred gradually and reflect the highly bureaucratic nature of the Defense Department. The initiation of new military acquisition projects has often been generated from strategic requirements, although project implementation and viability has relied on domestic political support and patronage within the service branches. Doctrinal development has often been driven by the necessities of current conflicts, such as the gradual acceptance of counterinsurgency tactics. Nevertheless, institutional preferences for the status quo and resistance to course corrections have challenged this evolution within the services.

TRENDS IN U.S. DEFENSE POLICY

The most notable of the current set of defense policy trends in the United States is also the most well known: the combination of growing budget pressures and the shift of U.S. military resources to the Asia Pacific region. Although a range of post-Cold War trends have become firmly established over the past several decades and merged with other even more entrenched defense policy trends, the "pivot" to Asia occurring under sequestration represents a thick layer of uncertainty resting atop everything else. Budgetary pressures have clearly influenced not only the strategic thinking within the administration but also its decisions about defense posture, acquisition policies, and force structure. Planned drawdowns in troop strength and basing facilities are, however, more easily accomplished in the current environment, given the broad consensus that the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were less successful than had been hoped and placed a great deal of stress on the U.S. military.

While former Defense Secretary Robert Gates successfully institutionalized many of the 'lessons learned' from a decade of protracted large-scale security operations and counterinsurgency campaigns, the Iraq and Afghanistan missions may ultimately be seen as an exception to the general trajectory of U.S. military operations as primarily geared toward short expeditionary-type operations and a "steady state" of global presence, training, and shows of force for deterrence purposes. The emphasis has shifted to ensuring U.S. access to regions of strategic interest, countering anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities with strategic stand-off offensive systems, ballistic missile defenses and penetrating systems relying on stealth or speed. Force planning and acquisitions reflect the readjustment back to this normal pattern, albeit at lower numbers due to the budget squeeze. But tension between the desired strategic direction of the United States and trends in the international security environment may present challenges in the near future.

FORCE STRUCTURE TRENDS

The removal of the Soviet military threat at the end of the Cold War and 1991 Gulf conflict precipitated a re-evaluation of the U.S. force planning construct. Rather than preparing to counter a global threat from the Soviet Union, the Defense Department began to transition to countering regional challenges and conducting so-called "major regional contingencies" – with particular emphasis on the Korean and Arabian peninsulas. This shift, which began to take shape in Powell's Base Force proposal and became fully visible in the 1993 Bottom-Up Review, amounted to a restructuring of its military capabilities while continuing to leverage its expansive global basing network. Over the next twenty years, the ability to wage two simultaneous regional wars would constitute the core force planning principle and remains clearly visible in the DoD's current planning construct even after recent modifications.

The 1993 Bottom-Up Review sized the force to have the ability to defeat two regional threats based on a 1991 Gulf War scenario: a conflict in which the United States responds to a ground invasion of a regional ally by first deploying air and naval forces, followed by ground forces able to mount a counter-offensive. The 1997 QDR, drafted during a period of sustained budget reductions and a "procurement holiday," added a requirement to conduct smaller-scale contingencies such as the crisis in the Balkans, in addition to fighting two major theatre wars, but nevertheless proposed a reduction in military personnel end strength in order to meet budgetary caps. The 2001 QDR, mostly written prior to 9/11 and revised only slightly after the September terrorist attacks, adjusted the two-war paradigm further by introducing the "1-4-2-1" sizing construct: defend the homeland, deter aggression and coercion in four

key regions, defeat adversaries in two overlapping conflicts, and conduct smaller contingency operations.

The 2006 QDR, drafted in the midst of two regional conflicts and an expansive global counterterrorism effort, acknowledged a "steady state" status quo of perpetual low-level conflict consistent with the idea of the "long war" on terrorism. It modified the "1-4-2-1" construct by including an irregular conflict or stabilization operation as one of the two regional contingencies the military should be prepared to face. By the time of the next QDR in 2010, the United States had concluded operations in Iraq and was surging forces in Afghanistan in order to begin extricating itself from that conflict as well.

The new administration retained Secretary of State Robert Gates and the resulting QDR deviated only slightly from the previous document with only minor modifications to the two-war paradigm. It was not until the budgetary situation became more pronounced that a new strategic direction was staked out in 2012 with the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), which reduced the level of ambition by requiring sufficient forces to prevail in one regional conflict and be able to deny an adversary's objectives or impose unacceptable costs in a second region. Forces would no longer be sized to support prolonged stability operations and the United States would rebalance its forces to the Asia Pacific region to counter the security challenges associated with a rising China (Panetta 2012).

A number of significant trends in force structure planning can be identified from these documents and other sources. First, there has been a growing appreciation for strategic surprise and the inherent uncertainty which characterizes the current international security landscape. Whereas the Cold War's seemingly stable bipolarity offered some predictability for military planners, the post-Cold War era has been unstable. During the George W. Bush administration, the Department of Defense shifted from scenario-based planning to capability-based planning in an attempt to address this problem, arguing that scenarios were less useful in the highly dynamic and quickly changing world. This strategic uncertainty has been emphasized in documents released by the Obama administration as well: the 2010 QDR noted the "complex and uncertain security landscape in which the pace of change continues to accelerate" (Gates 2010: 5). This uncertainty adds an additional element of risk to proposed force reductions and represents an incentive to retain as large a force as economically feasible to hedge against unforeseen developments.

In addition, strategic planners have expressed concern for anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Policymakers have long viewed the interests of the United States as global in reach, with security commitments to allies and an intention to counter threats abroad before they threatened the homeland. Strategic access and freedom of movement are therefore considered to be a vital national interest for which policymakers have frequently expressed concern. The growing proliferation of technology to state and non-state actors has, according to the two former Defense Department officials Flournoy and Brimley, eased the acquisition by foreign actors of "anti-access and high-end asymmetric technologies that can put allied infrastructure at risk and hamper U.S. power projection." Rising or resurgent powers such as China, India, and Russia might also "demand a role in maintaining the international system in ways commensurate with their actual or perceived power and national interests" (Flournoy and Brimley 2009).

The AirSea Battle concept is a tangible expression of this concern, as it was designed to negate Chinese and Iranian asymmetric capabilities in order to retain U.S. freedom of movement (Gates 2010: 31–32). This focus was reinforced by the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance document that emphasized the importance of countering A2/AD capabilities in Asia and the Middle East (Panetta 2012). The U.S. military continues to develop assets to forcibly gain access to denied territory, including stealth technology, unmanned systems, precision strike capabilities, and ballistic missile defenses. It is thought that such capabilities would not only allow the United States to retain global strategic access to regions where it has

vital national interests, but also to safeguard maritime shipping routes and maintain stability in the other realms of the global commons.

Even while engaged in stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has also rediscovered the importance of deterrent capabilities. Established nuclear powers such as China and Russia are developing new ballistic missiles, as are lesser state actors such as Iran and North Korea. A conventional conflict with any of the established nuclear states is much less likely than coercive threats, giving rise to the need to credibly counter such threats with strategic forces. The same holds true for smaller regional actors for which forcible regime change is either militarily or politically unfeasible. Paradoxically, then, as President Obama spoke of working towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, the role of strategic forces in U.S. security policy remain highly relevant, particularly the balance of strategic arms with China. Even if the administration chose to implement further reductions to its nuclear forces, the remaining weapons will represent an important component in overall U.S. defense posture, particularly as the U.S. shifts its gaze to the Asia Pacific theater.

In addition to its well-established strategic deterrent, the United States has emphasized regional deterrent structures grounded in bilateral and multilateral military partnerships, arms sales, and cooperative endeavors such as networked ballistic missile defense assets. Additionally, Washington has placed a premium on "forced entry" assets not only to ensure access in regions where adversaries have A2/AD technologies, but also to deter their deployment and use. By engaging allies and partners in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and East Asia, the United States hopes to maintain regional stability and deter aggression using stand-off assets.

Perhaps the most noticeable, controversial, and potentially game-changing trend in U.S. force structure is the explosive growth in the development, deployment, and utilization of unmanned systems. From 2002 to 2010, the Department of Defense inventory of unmanned systems grew from 167 to almost 7,500 aircraft. The Bush administration deployed unmanned platforms almost immediately in Afghanistan, using the Global Hawk for intelligence gathering and the Predator, which soon transitioned from a reconnaissance asset to a "hunter-killer" or armed reconnaissance platform with the addition of the AGM-114 Hellfire missile. A newer version of the Predator outfitted with a more diverse array of armaments, the Reaper, has taken over many of these mission sets from the Predator. New UAVs are being developed, including the much-heralded stealthy carrier-based X-47B system designed for use in contested airspace.

ACQUISITION TRENDS

Throughout the past decade of irregular warfare and stabilization operations, the Pentagon received substantial increases to its base budget and sizeable annual supplemental appropriations, of which a portion was normally used to purchase weapons systems. The U.S. military spent nearly $1 billion on acquisitions from 2001 to 2010, of which 22 percent came from wartime supplemental appropriations. During that time, the Defense Department saw its procurement budget balloon from $62 billion in 2001 to $135 billion by 2010. In general, the Defense Department used this acquisitions largess to modernize a military that had yet to fully recover from the lag resulting from the "procurement holiday" of the 1990s. It devoted a sizeable portion of the acquisitions budget to investments in new weapons for the conflicts in which it was currently engaged but also for the deterrence missions that are anticipated in the Asia Pacific region (Rumbaugh 2011).

In line with U.S. strategic culture, many of the weapons platforms purchased rely on cutting edge technologies and come with a significant price tag. In searching for continued technological domination of any potential opponents, the U.S. military has sought out increasingly complex weapon systems – which in turn increase per unit costs and cause

production delays. A 2006 RAND study of naval shipbuilding over the past five decades found that ship costs had increased at twice the rate of inflation and concluded that "the economy-driven factors (material, labor, and equipment) account for roughly half of the overall rate of increase, whereas the consumer-driven factors (complexity, standards and requirements, and procurement rate) account for the other half" (Arena, Blickstein et al. 2006). Notably, defense contractors have more frequently relied on a development model in which systems are designed, tested, and produced with a significant level of "concurrency" – that is, the initial production begins before the design is completely stable and before testing has been completed. This has resulted in significant delays in fielding new technologies such as fighter aircraft and missile defense systems, and has increased acquisition costs and in some cases produced less reliable weapons systems.

Some large programs were ultimately cancelled (the Future Combat Systems program for the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marine Corps Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, the Medium Extended Air Defense System, transatlantic BMD effort with Italy and Germany), others have been scaled back (the F-22 program, the Standard Missile 3 program), and some have not evolved as expected (the Littoral Combat Ship), which is less able to defend itself and less modular than originally planned, and the Ground Based Midcourse Defense system, which has experienced repeated test failures with its Ground Based Interceptors). Overall, the growing demand for ever-increasing capability and technological refinement on these weapons systems seems to have produced a significant number of costly yet potentially operationally unreliable assets.

The Army has, despite over a decade at war, retained a modern force – arguably the best equipped and most technologically advanced in the world. The Navy has steadily reduced the overall number of ships in its fleet, but has nevertheless kept quite close to its ten-year shipbuilding plans and represents a substantial and highly capable maritime force. The service chose to procure upgraded versions of existing fighter and electronic warfare aircraft rather than invest solely in fifth generation technology and therefore has a modern fleet of aircraft as it awaits the naval version of the F-35 Lightning II (Rumbaugh 2011). The Air Force made the conscious decision not to invest further in fourth generation technology due to concerns about aircraft survivability. Air Force Chief of Staff Norm Schwartz argued that the service would rather wait for cutting-edge planes than buy newer versions of older airplanes with 40 years of service life but only 10 years of survivability (Tirpak 2011).

The F-22 became one of the most costly acquisition programs ever, leading to a decision to purchase far fewer aircraft than originally planned. Despite having been deployed for over a decade, and at a time when the United States has been intensely engaged in two regional conflicts and an operation in Libya, the F-22 has for various reasons yet to see combat. Recent problems with the pilot oxygen supply have caused repeated groundings of the fleet and may have been implicit in one fatal crash, but the fighter's flight status has been reinstated without a satisfactory resolution of the problem. The F-35 program continues to suffer delays and cost overruns but is expected to be a highly capable weapons system when deployed near the end of the decade. The services appear so committed to fielding the aircraft that other alternatives are difficult to envision; questions remain regarding total numbers to be purchased but little doubt exists regarding the ultimate acquisition of the F-35. The U.S. Air Force has also invested substantially in unmanned aerial systems, which are poised to assume a much greater portion of airborne operations.

FORCE POSTURE TRENDS

The U.S. military's overseas presence, a holdover from the global U.S. Cold War posture, plays a crucial role in U.S. strategy. Not only do the hundreds of military installations located in nearly every region

of the world allow the U.S. to respond quickly to threats, their presence assists in shaping the strategic environment in regions deemed especially vital to U.S. interests. A 2005 review of U.S. basing strategy noted that "we cannot hope for much influence without presence – the degree of influence often correlates to the level of permanent presence that we maintain forward" (Cornella 2005). According to the Bush administration, a new global defense posture would shift away from "legacy Cold War structures" in Europe, reform U.S. posture in the Pacific "to assure allies ... dissuade potential competitors, deter aggressors, and defeat adversaries if called upon to do so," and develop "the operational flexibility and diversity in options needed to contend with uncertainty in the 'arc of instability'" (Henry 2006, 38). On a practical level, the global redeployment of U.S. forces entails closing a significant number of facilities in Europe and shifting to smaller installations with a lighter "footprint" closer to unstable regions.

Almost a decade later, many of these adjustments remain visible. The shift to the Pacific proceeds apace, accelerated by the drawdown from conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia. Revamped counterterrorism efforts remain a priority in those regions as well as throughout the continent of Africa, though the infrastructure for the persistent and expansive use of ground forces will no longer be required. Rather, as the U.S. attempts to shift away from personnel-demanding stability operations to a deterrent stand-off posture, the need for large operating bases has diminished. Smaller basing options and partnership agreements such as those in Australia and Singapore will provide rapid and flexible force projection options, while U.S. forces are consolidated onto well-established facilities in places like Guam and in legacy bases in Europe such as Rota, Spain. Reliable basing options in Africa continue to represent a challenge, while Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti which hosts the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa contingent will remain crucial to U.S. operations on that continent.

The termination of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan represents a significant juncture in U.S. force posture when combined with the type of challenges requiring attention in the Asia Pacific region. The geography and strategic realities in that region suggest a reduced role for significant numbers of ground troops, many of whom will likely be transitioned stateside. The U.S. will continue to position air and naval forces necessary for deterrence and force projection purposes throughout East and South Asia while retaining some assets in Europe and the Middle East. However, the location of U.S. military facilities may be less dramatic than the composition of assets deployed there – greater numbers of unmanned systems, littoral combat ships, Virginia-class attack submarines, B2 bombers, F35 Lightning II fighters, and ballistic missile defenses.

After a decade of land-based stabilization operations, the United States is on the cusp of a return to balancing and containment. Large basing facilities in Europe have been (and continue to be) replaced by smaller, more flexible basing arrangements in places like Australia, Singapore, and (once again) Subic Bay in the Philippines. Three island groups in the Pacific maintain a special status (a Compact of Free Association) with the United States – the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau – and provide some "strategic depth" alongside the expanding U.S. military presence on nearby Guam.

In a recent article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, outlined the U.S. Navy's shift to the region. By 2020, the day-to-day naval presence in the region will grow by 20 percent to 60 ships, an increase to be made possible by three developments. First, the four Aegis BMD destroyers to be based in Rota, Spain as part of the Phased Adaptive Approach will replace ten ships currently serving that function through rotations from the United States. The resulting six extraneous ships will be deployed to the Pacific. Second, new Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV) and Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) being added to the fleet will take on security cooperation and humanitarian missions in Africa and South America, freeing up destroyers and amphibious ships currently performing those tasks to deploy to the Pacific. Finally, more ships will utilize rotating crews (rather than the ships returning home), including the JHSVs, LCSs, and new seabasing assets (Greenert 2012).

FORCE DOCTRINE TRENDS

The most obvious and dramatic development in U.S. force doctrine over the past several years has been the abandonment of counterinsurgency (COIN) as a guiding principle for stabilization and counterterrorism operations. COIN was once considered the optimal set of tactics for addressing the root causes of armed resistance against foreign governments allied with the United States, particularly where terror organizations such as al-Qaeda have, at the very least, a symbiotic relationship with the armed resistance. The idea of providing stability, increased security, and government services to regions that are particularly vulnerable to influence or co-option by extremist groups seemed to be a logical solution to the problem of "safe havens" for terrorists, from which they could plan, train, and launch attacks. A well-executed COIN operation – conducted alongside more purely counterterrorism operations – could support the local population and host government while at the same time addressing some of the underlying causes of radicalization.

Ultimately, however, such operations have proven to be too demanding in almost every regard, including economic costs, the number of troops required to have a sufficient presence in local communities, obtaining reliable host government cooperation, or having sufficient local cultural and political awareness. Experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan seem to have convinced military planners and policymakers in Washington, many of whom were skeptical of COIN from the outset, that the significant investments in blood and treasure required were both unsustainable and ineffective – and that these types of operations would likely be unsuccessful in the future. Even Robert Gates, who as defense secretary advocated successfully for the institutionalization of counterinsurgency doctrines in the U.S. military in order to be fully invested in the wars the country was engaged in at the time, observed in his farewell address to the Army that "any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should 'have his head examined,' as General MacArthur so delicately put it" (Shanker 2011).

The failure of counterinsurgency/counterterrorism operations to sufficiently reduce the risks associated with fragile states acting as safe havens for extremist groups has led the United States to pursue a strategy that is more heavily dependent on counterterrorism missions involving raids by special operations forces and strikes from unmanned aerial vehicles. This combination has proven to be quite effective in eliminating the leadership ranks of the various al-Qaeda franchises in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen, although the opportunity costs – resentment from foreign governments, popular protests over civilian deaths, and potential radicalization – have yet to be quantified.

Despite these potential drawbacks, the United States continues to view global terrorist networks with apprehension and, in the absence of other options, has continued to rely on kinetic operations in order to keep the threat from groups such as al-Qaeda to a minimum. Rather than "rolling back" the terrorist threat, the United States has reduced its level of ambition to one of containment, using tactics that have temptingly few operational and political risks, particularly given the cloak of secrecy surrounding such operations. Despite signaling a reduced reliance on targeted killings in a speech at the National Defense University in May 2013, President Obama did not hesitate to unleash a wave of drone strikes in Yemen only three months later, when credible intelligence reports indicated a serious threat against U.S. interests in the region and prompted a wave of embassy closures (Baker 2013, BBCNews 2013).

The transition from a land-based counterinsurgency focused on sub-state actors has allowed military planners to continue the build-up of capabilities of greater use against other states. In order to retain its ability to react to crises around the globe, defend its interests, and intervene on behalf of its allies and partners, the United States has invested heavily in systems designed to counter the A2/AD capabilities of states such as China and Iran. This emphasis on access has driven U.S. military planners for several decades, but gained even greater momentum with the advent of increasingly advanced technologies that could negate the advantages enjoyed by the U.S.

military. Many of the weapons acquisitions, basing, and conceptual thinking occurring within the Pentagon today have concerns about access at their core.

The much-discussed AirSea Battle concept represents an attempt to develop new organizing principles for air, sea, and land power in order to retain access to the global commons or gain access to denied areas. The concept involves engaging and destroying A2/AD assets (whether Chinese, Iranian, or other) early in a crisis in order to retain strategic freedom of action. U.S. military leaders argue that the concept will ensure American power projection capabilities and promote regional stability (Schwartz and Greenert 2012). As two veteran RAND researchers point out, however, this "strategy" is a classic case of crisis instability where each side has an incentive to strike first (Gompert and Kelly 2013). Nevertheless, the service branches have recognized the gravitational pull toward AirSea Battle and are institutionalizing their approaches accordingly.

Outside the Asia-Pacific region where the administration's "light footprint" approach is in effect, the combination of unmanned systems, special operations forces and cyber capabilities may comprise a new sort of strategic triad. Recently retired SACEUR Admiral James Stavridis proposed this idea recently in the pages of *Foreign Policy* magazine, arguing that the military must be more prepared for the future electronic battlefield (Stavridis 2013). Scholar Gordan Adams, however, points out that the idea of strategic "retrenchment," with a shift away from large-scale military operations to smaller missions using elements of this new triad, is misunderstood as carrying less risk. Adams sees these developments as more secretive ("going underground"), less accountable, easier to misuse, and potentially damaging to long-term U.S. interests (Adams 2013).

CONCLUSION

The United States is transitioning away from stability and counterinsurgency operations in Eurasia and moving toward an offshore deterrent posture emphasizing two main missions: the containment of global terrorist groups (primarily al-Qaeda and its franchises) through SOF missions and targeted killings, and ensuring continued strategic access (particularly in the Asia-Pacific) through the development of systems and tactics to counter symmetric and asymmetric A2/AD capabilities. All the elements of U.S. security policy – force posture and structure, procurement and doctrinal trends – are currently in general alignment and moving toward such an offshore deterrent posture.

DOMESTIC FACTORS IN U.S. SECURITY POLICY

The formal processes of U.S. security policy formation – at least in their ideal form – have an implicit presumption of rationality. Despite bureaucratic maneuvering, personal relationships and institutional biases, a generally distinct set of policies is often decided upon and implemented by the executive branch with few domestic influences. Clearly, while each administration has significant flexibility regarding the formulation of the nation's security policies, there are structural, political, and cultural factors that limit the available choices. The tangible effects on policymaking of some of these factors may oftentimes be less obvious than those discussed in the previous chapters, but collectively they signify an important and powerful influence on long-term policy trends.

It is not uncommon to measure a state's capacity to exert influence in the international system using a measurable set of criteria such as population, gross

national product, defense budgets, military personnel, numbers and types of weapons systems, and so on. While these variables are useful for determining a state's potential for wielding economic and military power, a differentiation should be made between the potential power derived from a large economy or standing army, which can be inherently significant, and the active employment of such resources in specific instances in order to achieve some strategic goal. As the United States has repeatedly discovered, economic and military superiority alone can be insufficient for coercive or deterrent purposes. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that a country such as the United States is able to effectively channel its economic or military resources in a strategically prudent manner.

TRENDS IN DOMESTIC POLICY FORMATION

While some theories of international relations assume a relatively direct relationship between the elements of national power and their utilization, a number of factors determine how efficiently a state can transform latent power into actions that might lead to concrete results. As scholar Gideon Rose has noted, a state may harbor the sources of material power but an "international power analysis must take into account the ability of governments to extract and direct the resources of their societies" (Rose 1998: 161). Among the multitude of domestic variables that might affect the ability of the United States to harness its vast resource, several factors have become particularly relevant over the past decade. Three of these factors will be considered here: the structural and political capacity of the government to fund security and defense efforts; domestic political support for overseas operations; and the stability of the domestic political environment. Afterwards, three significant trends related to those domestic factors will be identified and discussed.

CAPACITY TO FUND SECURITY POLICIES

Collectively, funding for national security operations – whether for the Departments of Defense, Veteran's Affairs, Energy, Homeland Security or smaller entities among the host of other security actors in the United States – makes up roughly a quarter of all federal expenditures. Apart from the costs of waging the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and conducting a range of counterterrorism operations throughout the world, the United States continues to conduct routine military overseas deployments. Since September 2001, massive growth in security sector spending has also led to an expansion in the number of agencies and private actors within the United States, much of it cloaked in secrecy. After a two-year investigation, respected journalists Dana Priest and William Arkin of the *Washington Post* concluded in 2010 that

> the top-secret world the government created in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, has become so large, so unwieldy and so secretive that no one knows how much money it costs, how many people it employs, how many programs exist within it or exactly how many agencies do the same work. (Priest and Arkin 2010)

Continued funding for these activities constitutes a significant burden on the federal budget at a time when other fiscal obligations have grown steadily and create additional budgetary pressures.

Variables of a more structural nature can impact the government's ability to fund national security programs. One might consider the capacity of the U.S. economy to generate sufficient overall wealth for corporations and individual taxpayers, which in turn generates revenues for the federal government. The economic recession in the United States and the resulting combination of falling tax revenues and massive stimulus spending led to the budgetary squeeze and decision to enact "sequestration" legislation, which ultimately reduced defense spending. Analysts often measure defense expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), which in recent years has hovered around 4 percent when supplemental funding for Iraq and Afghanistan is included in the totals. While GDP is a useful tool

for estimating the total amount of national wealth available for federal collection, it does not indicate which percentage of GDP will be channeled into federal coffers and thereby made available for use. In other words, GDP determines the potential size of the federal budgetary pie, but says little about its actual size.

Furthermore, as pensions and growing health care costs demand a larger portion of the budget, discretionary spending for security programs will be increasingly squeezed – the classic "guns or butter" dilemma. In the United States, about 63 percent of the federal budget consists of spending obligations dictated by existing laws (Austin 2013). This mandatory spending is comprised primarily of the pension system (Social Security), health care spending for the elderly (Medicare) and low income citizens (Medicaid), and interest payments on the national debt.

Without Congressional legislation to adjust these obligations, such programs will continue to demand a large and growing portion of the budget, leaving less funds for year-to-year spending – including defense spending that accounts for about one quarter of the total budget. The structural trends – both demographic and economic – tend towards even larger expenditures on social programs as the so-called baby boomer generation reaches retirement age at a time when average life expectancy is creeping upwards and health care costs are projected to remain exorbitantly high despite the anticipated effects of the Affordable Care Act. Legislative adjustments to control the costs of these programs will be exceedingly difficult, both practically and politically.

DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS OPERATIONS

The high levels of defense spending in the United States – even if the system's substantial bureaucratic inefficiencies are taken into account – reflect the country's ambitious role as an international security provider with an overseas strategic posture that emphasizes a pro-active approach to security threats. This global posture and leadership role, solidified during the early years of the Cold War, has now become detached from the structural systemic requirements imposed by the bipolar balance of power with the Soviet Union. In a way that was unimaginable thirty years ago when faced with a Eurasian superpower, the U.S. leadership role can now be considered voluntary. The lack of a global peer competitor, and the real doubts surrounding the ability of China to sustain their economic growth, maintain domestic political stability or have a real global power projection capability in the foreseeable future, means that an active U.S. overseas military presence may constitute a strategic choice that must retain domestic political support for the constant and substantial financial burden it imposes.

This point raises the important yet often neglected question of how exactly domestic public opinion affects foreign and security policy. Political science scholars have suggested two models for transmitting public opinion to the political leadership in a democratically elected government. In a trustee model, elected representatives are expected to exercise their best judgment to make decisions reflecting the best interest of their constituents rather than what the public desires at any given time. In a delegate model, representatives follow the wishes of the voting public as reflected through (for example) public opinion polls. From an international relations perspective, public opinion is often viewed as a restraint on government actions or a powerful force which policy elites attempt to sway in support of a particular policy (Sobel 2001, 11). Scholars such as Richard Sobel and others divide the public into three groups: an uninformed and disinterested "mass public"; an informed but ultimately un-influential "informed public"; and an informed and influential "elite."

Based on newspaper circulation and random tests of public knowledge on foreign policy issues, it is estimated that the "mass public" constitutes around 90 percent of the population, the "informed public" around 10 percent, and the "elites" about 1–2 percent. Therefore, concluded scholar James Rosenau,

> [t]he mass public is uninformed about either the specific foreign policy issues or foreign affairs in general.... Its members pay little, if any, attention

> to day-to-day developments in world politics and lack structured opinions.... Thus their response to foreign policy matters is less one of intellect and more one of emotion. (Sobel 2001, 12)

Public opinion therefore offers little guide to policy. Interestingly, individuals are able to retain strongly held, coherent, and structured beliefs and preferences about foreign policy matters precisely because they lack information about the highly complex and confusing realities of world politics – which seldom lends itself to simplistic interpretations and solutions (Sobel 2001, 14).

Nevertheless, public opinion matters. Due to the fact that the president and his administration are mostly directly responsible for the conduct of U.S. foreign and security policy, the president's popularity acts as a direct measure of the public's approval of his policies. A popular president can more easily pressure Congressional representatives of both parties to approve his legislative agenda and thereby gain more freedom of action in the foreign policy realm. In general, the American public has tended to be "ideologically interventionist and operationally anti-interventionist.... In principle, people support an aggressive posture, but in practice they are more reluctant to get involved. Once involved, however, the public tends to 'rally' around the president and support interventions in response to presidential leadership as long as the involvement is brief or successful" (Sobel 2001, 16). This squares with IR scholar Colin Dueck's analysis that Americans are "reluctant crusaders" that support the spread of a liberal creed of individual freedom and majority rule, while exhibiting a cultural preference for avoiding costs and commitments (Dueck 2006, 26).

DOMESTIC POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

A relatively stable domestic political environment offers several advantages in the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign and security policy. Simply from a practical political perspective, an administration that can avoid frequent and overly burdensome political battles at home will be better positioned to focus on challenges abroad and will be able to do so while exuding the confidence gained from the knowledge that the American people are supportive. While the formulation and much of the implementation of foreign policy is conducted by the executive branch, departmental staffing and agency funding relies on Congressional approval. Domestic support for an administration's foreign policy in Congress and among the general public speeds those processes. Additionally, a popular president can more convincingly make promises and threats to other actors in the international system – increasing the chances of a successful policy outcome.

During the Cold War, there was broad consensus within both parties in Congress and among the foreign policy "elites" in the United States regarding the general direction of security policy. The existence of an overarching security threat made this consensus easier to maintain, in a manner similar to that experienced in the years following 9/11. In times of crisis or the perception of an overwhelming external threat, disagreement often ends at the water's edge and the American public tends to rally around its leaders. When that threat subsides and the policy direction is less obvious, there is greater domestic discord surrounding U.S. security policy. This was the case during the 1990s and appears to be the current situation as well. In such instances, domestic politics has often consumed the American public discourse – an arena in which bipartisanship and consensus are far from the norm.

The intense political wrangling over domestic politics can make it difficult for opposition leaders to lend support to the administration on issues that they otherwise might be inclined to do – simply to avoid giving the president a political boost. Given Senate Republicans' stated (but ultimately failed) ambition of making Barack Obama a one-term president, the words of scholar James Sundquist, writing in 1988, remain relevant:

> If the president sends a proposal to Capitol Hill or takes a foreign policy stand, the opposition ... simply must reject it. Otherwise they are saying the president is a wise and prudent leader. That would only strengthen him and his party for the next election, and how can [they] do that, when

their whole object is to defeat him when the time comes?" (quoted in (Lee 2008))

In this manner, domestic political stability can have an impact on security policy.

TRENDS IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS

There is a host of observable developments inside the United States that touch upon some of the most fundamental elements of American strength – economic, demographic, social, and political trends which, while not devastating in their immediate consequences, have the potential to hinder the full utilization of U.S. national power. As mentioned above, a state must not only have the capacity to generate military, economic, and diplomatic sources of power, but also the means by which those resources can be mobilized and purposefully channeled. A number of intensifying domestic trends threaten the ability of the United States to both mobilize and channel its resources effectively. Discussions about such trends can often become alarmist in nature, and it should be emphasized that none of the negative trends identified here need have an observably deleterious effect on the conduct of U.S. security policy. Nevertheless, they are sufficiently numerous and deep-rooted to warrant closer attention.

SHRINKING DEFENSE FUNDING

The most obvious domestic trend impacting security policy is the constrained budget climate in the United States – specifically the effects of the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, which introduced the mechanism of sequestration that will cut just under 10 percent annually from non-exempt defense spending for the next decade. These congressionally mandated reductions will force the Defense Department to undergo total budget reductions to the order of $1 trillion over the next ten years compared with the spending levels proposed by the Obama administration's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request prior to the BCA (Belasco 2013). The sequestration legislation is particularly challenging due to the requirement that uniform cuts be made to each DoD account (personnel, operations, and maintenance, procurement, military construction, etc.) rather than allowing the flexibility to shift funding among accounts to soften the effects of the reductions.

While some observers argue that defense spending has enjoyed unnatural growth over the past decade and can easily be reduced without threatening national security, the Defense Department has become accustomed to and planned for these higher levels. Now that reductions are a reality, both the administration and the Pentagon are in the process of adjusting their strategic ambitions downwards. The cuts appear likely to have a real and tangible effect on U.S. strategic posture for the foreseeable future. For a number of years, the strategic planning documents released by the United States have been characterized by an unwillingness to prioritize or match means with ends. Beginning with Secretary Gates in 2010 and continuing through Secretary Panetta and now Secretary Hagel, the administration has slowly begun to make more disciplined choices regarding personnel costs, overseas posture, and expensive acquisitions programs. Nevertheless, the total effect of these adjustments should not be exaggerated.

The Pentagon avoided planning for sequestration for several years, perhaps hoping that proposed cuts might become actual ones even if Congress found a way to nullify the BCA and the process of sequestration (Shane 2012). Now that the mandatory reductions have actually arrived and appear to have gained a modicum of acceptance in Congress, the Pentagon recently conducted a study outlining the potential options. In the Strategic Choices in Management Review (SCMR), seen as a precursor to the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, three scenarios were considered with varying levels of reductions. The review based the nation's strategic requirements on the president's defense strategy from 2012 and, according to Hagel, concluded that "the 'in-between' budget scenario we evaluated would 'bend' our defense strategy in important ways, and sequester-

level cuts would 'break' some parts of the strategy no matter how the cuts were made" (Parrish 2013). In general, it found that defense spending could not be cut both quickly and strategically, and urged that defense cuts be delayed or "backloaded" to minimize impact.

Seen more broadly, the portion of the federal budget available for security funds will be increasingly under pressure, irrespective of the sequestration cuts. Due to the structural forces outlined earlier, the capacity to fund security operations will be continually challenged as demographic trends and fiscal realities cause entitlement programs to consume a growing portion of the budget. While it might be assumed that defense spending would enjoy broad bipartisan support due to domestic political dynamics (Republican eagerness to maintain the nation's military strength, the Democrat's desire to avoid appearing soft on national security, both parties' interest in retaining important defense industry jobs in their districts, and so on), cuts to pension levels or elderly health care benefits may be even more politically problematic. If forced to choose between guns and butter, therefore, it appears that the Congress may view cutting "guns" as less politically damaging. Paradoxically, Americans appear weary from a decade of international military operations despite the pronounced isolation of the professional military from the rest of society – from which neither engagement nor sacrifice was required during the prolonged "war on terror." A recent national survey revealed broad support for significant reductions (up to 25 percent, on average) to the defense budget (Kull et al. 2012).

FRAGILE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

The country had the luxury of avoiding such choices for many years, as GDP kept pace with the growing national debt which could be kept within "acceptable" limits or even reduced, as was the case at the end of the Clinton administration. But sluggish economic growth followed by a deep recession led to lower federal revenue, a situation exacerbated by broad-based tax cuts in 2001 and again in 2003. At the same time, federal spending ballooned as the Bush administration reacted to the 2001 terrorist attacks by erecting a costly national security infrastructure and prosecuting two major conflicts abroad. The worsening recession led to the enactment of a massive government stimulus program at the end of Bush's term and several more sets of stimulus funding during the first years of the Obama administration. The net effect of decreased revenues and the huge growth in expenditures sent the federal debt to record levels and created strong structural pressures to contain future spending. But budgetary challenges are being felt not only at the federal level.

According to some analyses, the American economy has, for the past several decades, undergone a fundamental shift from manufacturing to services and information technologies, a trend that the latest recession greatly accelerated. As Don Peck wrote in a 2001 *Atlantic* article:

From 2007 to 2009, total employment in professional, managerial, and highly skilled technical positions was essentially unchanged. Jobs in low-skill service occupations such as food preparation, personal care, and house cleaning were also fairly stable. Overwhelmingly, the recession has destroyed the jobs in between. Almost one of every 12 white-collar jobs in sales, administrative support, and non-managerial office work vanished in the first two years of the recession; one of every six blue-collar jobs in production, craft, repair, and machine operation did the same. (Peck 2011)

These jobs were already imperiled. Due to globalization and computer-aided production techniques, these less skilled middle class jobs are becoming scarce in the United States. Large numbers of workers are relegated to lower paying jobs without the possibility for promotion. Whereas experience and seniority often led to higher wages and entry-level employees could steadily advance to management, the gap between the skills sets needed to operate a machine versus a highly educated technician to adjust it has now become so large that this traditional path to upward mobility is no longer possible (Davidson 2012). It is conceivable that the job reductions by corporations during the recession constituted the shedding of excess fat from the labor pool: many of those jobs may not be returning. Peck

argued that "the overall pattern of change in the U.S. labor market suggests that in the next decade or more, a larger proportion of Americans may need to take work in occupations that have historically required little skill and paid low wages" (Peck 2011).

Such developments can contribute to long-term reductions in U.S. productivity, competitiveness, and wealth creation. While the economic effects of marked growth in domestic shale oil and gas extraction, for example, has been felt in some areas of the country – a development that may potentially have strategic consequences – its cumulative effect remain uncertain. Even as the U.S. economy appears to be rebounding, some economists are observing that much of the growth does not appear to be accompanied by corresponding increases in employment. The risks of a "jobless" recovery and its consequences for many Americans may have repercussions beyond economics.

These market tendencies exacerbate another economic trend: the growing inequality in the distribution of wealth in the United States. Even though median incomes have stagnated over the past thirty years, the middle class still enjoyed an increased (albeit artificial) standard of living as housing prices rose considerably and families leveraged the equity accrued through home ownership to purchase additional goods and services. As the housing market declined, many Americans were left with huge debts that now could not be covered through home ownership alone. This income gap was recently highlighted by President Obama in an interview with the *New York Times*, in which he argued that income inequality was fraying the social fabric of the country and eroding Americans' belief in opportunity and social mobility (Calmes and Shear 2013).

Journalist George Packer has argued that an unwritten social contract has existed in the United States between the elites and the masses, guaranteeing a wide distribution of post-World War Two prosperity – a contract that has been violated by the elites. The income gap has combined with the influx of organized money into politics from the 1970s onward to marginalize the lower and middle classes in influencing politics. (Packer 2011, Bennet 2012). Packer argued that income inequality erodes trust among citizens, generates anger at elites and government in general, reduces the willingness to find collective solutions to collective problems, and generally undermines democracy (Packer 2011). Traces of this sentiment can be seen throughout the country and have contributed to an even greater skepticism of Washington.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND LEGISLATIVE GRIDLOCK

When Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election, he was already conscious of the growing partisan divisions in the country and campaigned in part on a promise of healing those divisions. In his victory speech, he urged Americans to "resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long," proclaiming that the nation had "never been a collection of red states and blue states; we are, and always will be, the United States of America" (NPRNews 2008). That ambition was never realized and President Obama has presided over an almost unprecedented level of political discord. Although partisanship has long been an element of American politics, the level and intensity of polarization have grown to the extent that it now hinders Congress from performing basic governmental functions.

The opposition to President Obama among conservative voters in the United States – inspired by a combination of anti-elitism, skepticism to his collectivist and expensive center-left policies, or perhaps simply a reaction to his international upbringing or even the color of his skin – has been surprisingly intense. The Tea Party phenomenon, the influence of which has varied since its peak in 2010–12, reinvigorated the strongly conservative wing of the Republican Party and forced Congressional leaders to shun attempts at consensus building. Meanwhile, left-leaning Democratic voters who felt that victory in the presidential election should translate into the passage of their legislative agenda have not been willing to concede much political ground either. The dramatic drop in approval ratings for one of the Republican Party's rising stars, Senator Marco Rubio, has been attributed to his outspoken support for a

politically moderate legislative solution for immigration reform.

An interesting trend that has surfaced over the past several years in the United States is the rise of the libertarian voters. In the 2012 Republican presidential primary contests, fringe candidate Ron Paul placed surprisingly well and raised over $40 million. His son, Rand Paul, the newly-elected senator from Kentucky, recently made headlines with a long "filibuster" on the Senate floor protesting against the administration's use of drones and their potential misuse for domestic targeting of U.S. citizens. Other recent issues – including the legalization of marijuana, gay marriage, and reactions to the Snowden revelations of domestic electronic surveillance programs – have reinforced the impression that Americans, who have always harbored a healthy skepticism of government power, appear to be growing even more wary (Blake 2013, Cillizza 2013). The most interesting aspect of the libertarian trend, which currently remains quite limited, is its particular appeal to younger voters and the potential for the political philosophy – which normally exhibits a strong resistance to an active global role for the U.S. – to evolve into an influential political movement.

Scholars and journalists agree that disagreement between voters of opposing parties has grown over the past several decades. Partisan polarization has been described as the "new normal" – with deep divides among both elites and regular voters over fundamental issues such as the size and scope of government, as well as a range of social issues (Balz and Cohen 2012). Foreign and security policy issues have not been immune to this polarization tendency, although a fairly broad consensus on many of these issues remains. The clearest divisions exist over how voters rank the importance of issues such as a strong overseas military presence, the role of the United Nations, and efforts to counter climate change (Smeltz 2012).

Due to the procedural frameworks in Congress requiring a de facto "supermajority" to end debate and bring legislation to a vote, political divisions between (and, importantly, within) parties have regularly ended in deadlock. The past several sessions of Congress have been significantly less productive and fundamental tasks such as crafting an annual federal budget have proven impossible, with the U.S. government operating on temporary spending bills ("continuing resolutions"). This has negatively impacted security spending processes, complicating long-term procurement contracts and hindering the ability of the Defense Department to move funds among the various accounts in order to lessen the impact of reduced appropriations.

The sequestration mechanism in the Budget Control Act was the direct result of an acknowledgement by both parties that a solution for budgetary policy needed to be forced into existence by creating a self-enacting mechanism so onerous (if no agreement were reached) as to coerce the parties into a deal. When the parties still could not agree, the sequestration mechanism – which was labeled by several military leaders as one of the nation's greatest security threats – went into effect. Disagreements have spilled over into foreign policy processes that traditionally have been without such divisions: the adoption of the New START Treaty and the confirmations of John Brennan (CIA) and Chuck Hagel (Defense) come to mind.

The unwillingness to seek compromise on the most fundamental issues – but in particular budgetary decisions – has led to political brinkmanship as Congressional representatives respond to voter pressures and party leaders focus on tactical political victories rather than implementing effective policies. This crisis mentality, exemplified by sequestration and the continuous battles over raising the nation's debt ceiling, encourages political maneuvering and a focus on short-term solutions without any hope of a long-term "grand bargain." As then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated in February 2013,

> today, crisis drives policy. It has been too politically convenient to simply allow a crisis to develop and get worse and then react to the crisis ... the price to be paid is that you lose the trust of the American people. You create an aura of uncertainty that pervades every issue and gradually undermines the

> very credibility of this nation to be able to govern itself. (Panetta 2013)

The prospects for correcting this damaging trend seem to be disappointingly poor. Growing partisanship among voters, and the tendency for more strongly opinionated activist voters to influence the early "primary" elections deciding which candidates each party fields in the general election, has led many representatives in Congress to adhere to a much stricter and less compromising voting pattern to avoid being challenged from within the party by an even more uncompromising candidate. The process of redrawing voting districts has resulted in more politically homogeneous districts that reward party-line votes, and an increasing number of voters obtain their news from sources that appeal to their political views, thereby reinforcing their existing positions and reducing the willingness to compromise. The climate in Washington is such that a significant number of politically moderate Congressmen and Senators have chosen to retire, which weakens the legislature's ability to find consensus and taps the Congress of "institutional memory" – particularly with regard to politicians that have foreign and defense policy backgrounds (Samuelsohn and Gaskell 2012). There is little reason to assume that these tendencies will abate with a shift from Democratic to Republican leadership in the White House.

CONCLUSION

For a democratic state to effectively mobilize the military, economic and diplomatic elements of its national power, the policies must be approved and funded by the legislature: in this case the U.S. Congress. In general, public opinion has surprisingly little influence on either the formulation or the implementation of security policy, but the general population holds some indirect sway over the positions held by representatives in Congress. In general, the U.S. voting public is both uninterested and uninformed about foreign policy decisions, making their general attitudes toward these issues both unreliable and easily influenced. Despite this disinterest, the political positions held by the voting public – particularly by party activists during primary season – have an increasingly strong hold on the political landscape, encouraging uncompromising positions on domestic issues that are having a carry-over effect on foreign policy issues.

The defense budget will likely continue to contract, partly due to the 2011 Budget Control Act that crafted the sequestration mechanism now being implemented and partly due to structural budgetary trends in the United States that will continue to require an increasing proportion of the federal budget for entitlement programs. The economic situation in the U.S. is improving, but exhibits some structural weaknesses that may affect the long-term growth potential for "Main Street USA," if not the financial sector on Wall Street. These socio-economic trends combine with the political polarization that has worsened over the past several decades to create an atmosphere of distrust and resignation over the political process. The political gridlock in Congress appears to have become an almost permanent fixture in Washington, disrupted only intermittently by self-created crises that inspire a flurry of activity and a new temporary solution. Due to the self-exacerbating tendencies of many of these trends, the situation will most likely continue to worsen.

CONCLUSIONS

The United States finds itself in a precarious strategic position. After a decade of conflict that strained the all-volunteer force and a deep economic recession that strained both the populace and the federal budget, the country's leadership is re-evaluating its role in a fluctuating international system characterized by economic shifts and political upheaval. The perceived threats to U.S. national security have not diminished, but the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided the nation with a greater appreciation of the complexity of those threats and the limitations of U.S. military and diplomatic tools in dealing with them. At the same time, a disorganized and raucous debate over the size and scope of the federal government has consumed much of the political oxygen within the United States and mostly paralyzed the legislative process. Both in security policy and in domestic matters, the United States stands at what some have termed an "inflection point": a crossroads imbued with political choices that have deep-seated philosophical implications – more international engagement or less, more domestic federal programs or less.

In this study, an attempt was made to separate process from substance in order to assess the near-term future of U.S. security policy and the strategic implications of that future for the NATO alliance. Accordingly, these concluding observations will be divided into three parts. First, some parting observations will be made concerning patterns in the security policy-making process. This will be followed by a number of observations about the substance of that policy and a number of inherent tensions that will likely arise. Finally, combining these observations about process and substance forms the basis for a number of possible implications these trends may have for the NATO alliance and for Norway.

FOUNDATIONS OF U.S. SECURITY POLICY

The president and his administration wield an enormous amount of influence over the direction and substance of U.S. foreign and security policy. Particularly regarding the use of force, the occupant of the Oval Office has an almost unencumbered power as commander in chief to order the engagement of American military forces abroad or, just as importantly, refrain from engagement. The expansion of the power of the executive branch over the past decades in security and foreign policy has occurred in parallel with an enhanced ability to gather information. This ability, however, comes at a price: the available data is oftentimes difficult to analyze simply due to the overwhelming volume of information to which the government has access. Nevertheless, the executive branch has a centralized decision making apparatus with a significant amount of control over the flow of information – allowing it even greater flexibility in the execution of security policy.

The style of leadership of each president appears to have a significant influence over how decisions are made – especially regarding the level of detail in policy decisions and the speed with which such decisions are made. President Obama is extremely involved in the policy details – which has the advantage of challenging certain issues for which a sort of bureaucratic momentum has developed behind a particular option. On the other hand, such micromanaging also leads to decisional delays and an overreliance on the judgment of one individual can negate the benefits of having a group of trusted advisers, from whose input a collective policy solution might be formed. In addition, the highly personalized nature of presidential decision making can result in dramatic policy shifts from one administration to the next. The potential for such shifts in policy is most relevant for the application of military force or diplomatic initiatives, as other types of action are more dependent upon defense policies with more bureaucratically ensconced foundations. The president has greater control, for instance, over the use of military force and much less

control over the composition of that force in terms of personnel and equipment.

The continuous evolution of U.S. defense policy is much more complex and involves a greater number of actors, whose individual influence is oftentimes difficult to gauge. Pentagon planners are cognizant of the changing strategic landscape and must strike a balance between possible and the probable contingencies. With unconstrained budgets and unlimited training time, it might be possible to field adequate forces and weapons systems for all possible contingencies, but compromises must be made. Strategic documents such as the National Defense Strategy or Quadrennial Defense Review take their cues from the White House's National Security Strategy or Defense Strategic Guidance documents. While much of the drafting of a QDR has been institutionalized and is therefore a highly bureaucratized process, such documents remain meaningful for strategic planning purposes. The most recent documents reflect a greater awareness of the economic constraints to U.S. strategy than previous versions. The 2014 QDR may be extremely important: will it confirm the existing defense policy trajectory staked out in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance document or will it seek out yet a new direction?

The United States has gradually moved away from the "two war" force planning construct and has begun to rebalance its forces toward the Asia Pacific, though both of these trends should be understood as incremental changes rather than abrupt shifts. The military has begun its return to high intensity warfare – both doctrinally and through procurement patterns – with a focus on deterrence, shows of force, and a capacity to forcibly gain entry into denied areas. New partnerships and regional alliances are being formed with the United States acting as an enabler, whereby regional stability can be maintained without a sizable U.S. presence. Maintaining a deterrent posture will gain added significance with increased reliance on submarines, ballistic missile defense, unmanned systems for ISR and strike, as well as strategic and tactical aircraft. New military weapons systems continue to be highly complex with advanced technologies and sizable price tags – limiting quantities in search of quality and enhanced survivability. After a decade of land-based conflicts, the near-term future role for U.S. forces will likely be as a deterrent – that is, these systems will be deployed with the hope that their use in combat will not be necessary. Kinetic counterterror operations will generally be limited to SOF missions and aerial strikes from unmanned systems in ungoverned regions, as these are a relatively low-risk and low-cost way to keep the terrorist threat in check. Stabilization operations will be viewed with extreme skepticism.

On the domestic front, a worrying set of trends gives little cause for optimism regarding the ability of the United States to find long-term solutions for many of the fundamental challenges it faces. The structural capacity of the United States to continue to fund global security operations is complicated by uncontrolled growth in entitlement programs, due to rising health care costs and the imminent retirement of the wave of so-called "baby boomers" born after World War Two. Without fundamental reforms in some domestic programs, these costs will consume an unsustainable portion of the budget. Due to the strongly polarized political climate, however, consensus-based reforms are difficult to reach as partisan politics and an almost permanent election cycle encourage tactical maneuvering and positioning on issues rather than serious attempts at long-term solutions.

These tendencies exacerbate a set of powerful trends outside the Washington Beltway. The deep economic recession appears not only to have eliminated a significant number of "middle skilled" jobs that may not return, but the economic downturn has also worsened the income disparities between socio-economic classes. The lack of social mobility and economic inequality may negatively affect national cohesion, further erode trust in government, and ultimately undermine the democratic process. These economic pressures, when combined with growing political polarization among the population and legislative gridlock in Washington, give voters little incentive to support consensus-based solutions and reward moderate politicians at the polls. The most worrying aspect of the domestic political situa-

tion is that it is self-exacerbating. In such a climate, it is likely that more voters will turn inward rather than offer continued public support for international operations.

TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS IN U.S. SECURITY POLICY

Given the trend lines described in this study, there are a number of significant tensions that may affect future policy outcomes. In general, it may be expected that the United States will continue along its current trajectory of domestic political stalemate and indecision, but shuffling along in a foreign policy context. Nevertheless, trends seem to indicate an overall weakening of the structural foundations of the U.S. global leadership position that will, without any course corrections, lead to an erosion of its power and influence on the international stage.

AGENT OR STRUCTURE

This classic agent-structure in political science has been aptly illustrated during the past five years as the Obama administration repeatedly pursued hardline defense policies despite his liberal Democratic pedigree. Some of the surprise and disappointment felt by fellow Democrats in the U.S. and liberal Europeans came as a result of strong dissatisfaction with his predecessor, George W. Bush, and a somewhat misguided and glorified idea of the changes that would occur under President Obama. Once in office, he found that many of the issues he hoped to address had deeper, structural explanations than simply constituting misguided Bush policies – including the prison at Guantanamo Bay, resentment of the United States in the Middle East, poor relations with Russia, nuclear proliferation worries, and the level of secrecy related to national security operations at home and abroad. In some instances – most notably in counterterrorism operations – President Obama pursued more aggressive policies than Bush, authorizing and becoming personally involved in a widespread campaign of secretive extra-judicial targeted killings utilizing unmanned aerial vehicles.

The application of military force is among the most dramatic and costly policy decisions for any nation, and in the United States that decision rests almost solely with the president. The policymaking community and network of advisors within the executive branch can often shape the decision-making framework through informational access and bureaucratic maneuvering, but the final decision remains in the hands of one person. The world view and leadership style of a president will have the greatest impact on U.S. policy when responding to crises or other short-term endeavor. The ability of the president to affect policy deceases as the policy's time line increases – long-term trends in force structure and posture are much less affected by one individual president. At the same time, the capabilities at the president's disposal define his options: whether it be a reaction to North Korean provocation with or without the protection of an effective missile defense system or a raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan with stealthy helicopters and a highly trained special operations unit. Given the current trajectory of U.S. force planning, a future president will have fewer options for deploying stabilization or counterinsurgency forces, and a greater number of options for smaller incursions in Asia and Africa or shows of force to deter and dissuade state actors in the Asia-Pacific.

CAPABILITY OR CAPACITY IN U.S. FORCES

Apart from the usual buzz surrounding the drafting and release of such documents, the impending 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review Report is viewed by some as a potentially valuable tool for making a number of strategically crucial choices that may have long-term implications. Current and future reductions to the U.S. defense budget will compound long-standing dilemmas regarding the balance between quality and quantity. As was outlined in Chapter six, weapons systems are increasingly capable due to the inclusion of advanced technologies, but this development has led to much higher unit costs. As a result, fewer numbers of these systems can be purchased and fielded under constrained budgets. This trend applies equally to naval vessels, fighter aircraft or the equipment carried by an infantryman.

The more complex and capable the weapon system, the fewer units of that system can be purchased. Additionally, there is a trade-off between investing in current technologies that can be fielded in the near term against current threats, and modernization to prepare for future threats.

With the reduced defense budget, these choices are becoming even more acute. Defense Department leaders and analysts now speak of a balance between "capacity" and "capability." Analyst John Arquilla explained in this way:

> By "capacity cuts," the Hagel team – which conducted a comprehensive internal strategic review this past spring – means basically numbers. Of troops, tanks, ships, planes, and so on. "Capability cuts" refer to quality-oriented matters, ranging from modernization of weapons, transport, and information systems to expanding capabilities in such key areas as special operations and cyberwar. The underlying sense of the review is that the U.S. military now confronts something of a zero-sum situation: Holding on to capacity means sacrificing capability; emphasizing capability requires loss of capacity ... keeping a very expensive procurement program in place – like the F-35 fighter plane, with production costs of about $400 billion, and even more in operations and maintenance – imposes pressure to reduce troop levels. (Arquilla 2013)

David Barno and Nora Bensahel of the Center for a New American Security argue that the 2014 QDR should find answers to the crucial question of how the United States should "balance investments in military capabilities today to position the nation to fully deal with less clear threats of tomorrow," given that the Defense Department seems to prioritize investments in new versions of existing weaponry. They point out that the F-35 fighter exemplifies this dilemma as the largest single defense acquisition program:

> Yet most defense thinkers expect future strike aviation to be dominated by long-range unmanned (and perhaps autonomous) strike platforms that are currently a low priority among all three services. This tactical aviation paradox is emblematic of the "today vs. tomorrow" investment, a capacity vs. capability dilemma that has a parallel in almost every DOD modernization program. There are simply not enough resources in future budgets to support both approaches. (Barno and Bensahel 2013)

At a time when technological advances are occurring rapidly and pressures to retain technological advantages are strong, the United States has also shifted to a more deterrence-based posture that relies largely on sustaining a constant presence – particularly in the Asia-Pacific – and for which a sufficient capacity is necessary. The 2014 QDR may provide more strategic guidance regarding such decisions, but the fact remains that the U.S. has global security obligations, costly weapon systems, and an historic aversion to making tough strategic choices.

US ABILITY TO INFLUENCE

In a broader sense, the ability of the United States to exert influence in order to shape events and policies around the globe that affect its national security appears to be in decline. One reason for this is the expanded concept of security in the post-Cold War and particularly the post-9/11 world. The security environment is understood to be increasingly complex and interconnected, with non-state actors having greater access to destructive technologies. Some analyses of the future security environment even foresee a "post-state" world in which the relevance of state governments is substantially diminished.

The potential for regional political instability that may harm U.S. economic interests or the security of U.S. allies cannot easily or effectively be reduced by U.S. actions, whether it be the spread of weaponry with 3D printing allowing production anywhere on the globe or internet access enabling the spread of information about biological agents. Terrorist organizations based in ungoverned spaces can still launch horrific attacks on civilian populations. The Arab Spring – rooted in political and economic repression that itself has proved difficult to address – transpired in part due to the effective use of social

media. Piracy off the coast of Somalia – which has now abated somewhat due in part to the effective deployment of NATO forces – also had political and economic causes which led sub-state actors in this remote country to cause such disruptions to international shipping that the action of a military alliance was needed to address it. Some reports project dramatic security implications from the effects of global climate change, as rising sea levels and changing weather patterns cause mass migration, droughts, water shortages, and conflict over dwindling resources.

The need to accept a greater degree of risk regarding such outcomes has increased – and it appears as though the United States is becoming more acceptant of these risks – while at the same time the potential costs of ignoring these problems has increased due to improved access to advanced technologies. Over the past decade, the United States has attempted to address its security issues in the Middle East and Central Asia through a combination of military, diplomatic, and economic efforts. By focusing on governance issues, Washington hoped to find long-term solutions to seemingly intractable security challenges. Efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan appear so far to be less successful, and seem to have convinced U.S. policymakers of the futility of nation-building. Less ambitious governance projects begun during the Bush administration, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, have also struggled.

With a greater number of political, economic, social, and demographic factors impacting the security landscape, the United States has less ability to effect change and exert influence. Washington has traditionally been predisposed to military solutions for solving its security challenges, and many current and future security challenges do not lend themselves to military solutions. With the administration's state-centered rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific and the expensive capabilities being developed for that theater, future U.S. presidents will have even fewer options in other parts of the world to influence the complex set of factors upon which regional stability rests. A further complication may be the growing reluctance of the American public to support the costs associated with maintaining a global power projection capability, an attitude held by the growing number (albeit still a minority) of libertarian voters in the United States.

POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS IN THE PACIFIC

In August 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton traveled to Beijing and met with Chinese leaders. On her way, however, she first stopped in Rarotonga, Cook Islands for the Pacific Island Forum to emphasize the continuing engagement of the United States in the Pacific (Richter 2012). While Secretary Clinton's remarks focused on transnational threats, maritime issues and economic opportunities, journalists and experts suspected a more traditional motive lay behind the visit. The strategic importance of the Pacific island nations has grown considerably with the rebalancing of military capabilities toward the Asia-Pacific region. Plans for new U.S. military bases in the region have been formalized, including locations in Australia and Singapore, and others discussed in Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines. The U.S. military presence on the island territory of Guam is being greatly expanded, military testing facilities in the Marshall Islands continue to be important and frequently utilized, discussions have commenced with the Philippines regarding a renewed military partnership at Subic Bay, and even the island nation of Palau has offered its territory for a U.S. base.

Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), along with the U.S. territory of Guam, are in close proximity to what both U.S. and Chinese planners have referred to as the "second island chain," a strategic area symbolizing the flank of the U.S. military presence in the region in an eventual regional conflict between the great powers. These three states – Palau, RMI, and FSM – have entered into a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States, whereby they retain the status of sovereign states but receive economic assistance and military protection from the U.S. in exchange for access to its territory and the expressed exclusion of other states' involvement in economic or military activities. This may become even more relevant as China expands its economic

and political activity in the region, a trend identified with apprehension by the most recent Australian defense white paper. A low-level "great game," such as that which has simmered in Central Asia for the past several decades and in which states balance the great powers against each other for maximum benefit, could easily transpire in the Pacific.

At the same time, the international scientific community continues to issue warnings about the severity of global climate change. The ability of the international community to act in a prompt and coordinated manner so that the most severe effects of climate change, the so-called "two degree guardrail," can be avoided, appear to be in doubt, thereby significantly increasing the likelihood that the projected environmental effects of climate change will occur. The Pacific island states that represent such geostrategically relevant territory are also among those areas that will be most adversely impacted by the effects of climate change, including increased frequency and intensity of tropical storms, flooding due to rising sea levels, and changes to local plant and animal life, which could impact societal sustainability and cause mass migrations. PACOM commander Admiral Samuel Locklear stated in March 2013 that climate change "is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen . . . that will cripple the security environment, probably more likely than the other scenarios we all often talk about" (Bender 2013). Even in a region where interstate competition dominates, a host of non-state factors may have a substantial impact on U.S. security policy – and are factors over which the U.S. has limited control.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO

As the Obama administration began publicly discussing the rebalancing of U.S. military assets toward the Asia Pacific, it spoke of a "pivot" to Asia. The symbolism was that of Washington turning its back on the transatlantic security partnership. While U.S. officials moved to reassure European capitals of continued American military presence and commitment to the region, there are some inescapable facts that arise from the trends. While it has been argued here that the rebalancing to Asia should be seen as an incremental adjustment to policy rather than a radical shift, there are consequences of the adjustment regardless of its incremental approach. Other trends in U.S. security policy will likely act to reinforce the U.S. rebalancing away from Europe as well.

HOLDING DOWN THE FORT

Many policy trends point in the same direction, that is, towards the Asia Pacific with interstate conflict-centric deterrent capabilities arranged (with limited numbers) in a defensive posture. With reduced military budgets, the hard choices are now being made. With the gradual reduction in the threat from al-Qaeda and similar terrorist organizations, for which a low-risk and relatively low-cost strategy has now been found, the perceived risks from state actors such as China, North Korea, and Iran have now come to the fore. With concepts such as AirSea Battle, the United States is now focusing on countering the threat to its freedom of movement and to the global commons posed by other state actors. Needless to say, the systems required for these types of operations are distinctly different from those needed to perform COIN operations in Central Asia – and in many instances more costly. While it is not impossible to re-mobilize for stability operations, the political and logistical costs simply add an extra barrier to such a decision being made.

Despite this rebalancing, the complex array of threats that have kept the U.S. engaged in what the Bush administration viewed as an "arc of instability" stretching from Africa through the Middle East and on to Central and South Asia will not dissipate. The situation across the entire Greater Middle East remains extremely precarious, with fragile governments in place as a result of the Arab Spring – most significantly in Egypt. The civil war in Syria continues to rage, increasing the likelihood of even greater involvement by other regional actors, and the risk of a regional conflict. Further south, unrest and extremist groups are active in western Africa and threaten stability in places such as Nigeria and Mali. European governments – with France taking a particularly ac-

tive role – will often be compelled to act, whether out of humanitarian grounds, to counter the risk of mass migrations to Europe or to address security risks from terrorist groups or transnational criminal networks.

The U.S. rebalancing to Asia will entail a reduced capacity to contribute to such security missions in Europe's near abroad. This is not to say that the U.S. will abandon its obligations within the NATO alliance, but for those missions relying on voluntary contributions – such as Operation Unified Protector in Libya – the alliance may have fewer assets available from the United States. Therefore, NATO will to a greater extent than before need to have the capabilities and wherewithal to act without U.S. leadership or its enabling capabilities such as ISR assets or midair refueling capabilities. Even so, the United States will continue to rotate a sizable force through Europe for training purposes, and deploy assets under the guise of the Phased Adaptive Approach for NATOs ALTBMD ballistic missile defense program.

If the United States is willing to accept a greater degree of strategic risk in these regions, European NATO members will have to decide whether they are comfortable with the same level of elevated risk or be willing to undertake operations that can reduce those risks. The U.S., for its part, will likely continue to pursue a strategy of containing (rather than rolling back) the terrorist threat throughout Central Asia and Africa with SOF and UAVs. Despite the political fallout from this reliance on targeted killings and a temporary slowdown in those types of missions, the Obama administration quickly accelerated drone strikes in Yemen after tangible threats to U.S. assets were uncovered – a pattern of use that is likely to be repeated (Dilanian 2013). It is important to note that the U.S. rebalance to the Asia Pacific is reliant on the containment of security threats in Europe's near abroad. Continued stability in Europe is an important pre-condition for U.S. activities in Asia, particularly given the likely reductions in U.S. defense budgets.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY

The choice for European NATO members appears to be threefold. First, they can contribute to regional security in their own backyards through cooperative ventures with other NATO allies and policies that exude strength while avoiding conflict. Second, NATO members can build capacities that can be utilized in the troubled regions across Europe's southern borders, in what the Bush administration called the "arc of instability": Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Even though the United States might de-emphasize the strategic importance of these regions, they will continue to breed security challenges. European nations can build assets for security and stabilization missions and continue developing rapid reaction forces to deal with crises in their strategic neighborhood. Finally, Europeans can contribute smaller numbers of costly and highly specialized weapon systems that are in demand both in Europe and the Asia Pacific.

For a country such as Norway, with a relatively solid defense budget but limited military personnel, the third type of contribution might be logical. Smaller nations will never be able to contribute in sizeable numbers to stabilization operations, but may have more of an impact with well-trained personnel operating a limited number of highly capable ballistic missile defense assets such as the SM-3 interceptor or by contributing to ISR missions with a number of unmanned aerial systems. As these systems will also be utilized by the United States primarily in Asia, but may be in demand in other regions, the ability of NATO allies to reduce the operational demands for precisely these assets in the European and the Middle East/Central Asian regions may be a welcome contribution.

ADJUSTING TO AN INSULAR AMERICA

The United States has a long tradition of global engagement and the predominant view in both political parties is one of international leadership: through institutions and liberal interventions within the

Democratic Party and through unilateral, alliance or coalition-based military interventions within the Republican Party. However, a growing number of voters are subscribing to a minimalist form of government – libertarianism – that eschews an active international role. Even without the libertarian trend, many Americans are war-weary and ready to reduce government spending – including defense spending. Continued reductions in military appropriations, combined with uncertain political support for an active role in world affairs, could lead to a reduced role for the United States. The merits of continued active engagement or strategic retrenchment have been actively debated in the international security/international relations scholarly journals – where a significant number of respected scholars question the benefits of continued global military primacy.[8] This point of view represents by no means the fringe of the U.S. policy elite. Even though the majority of policy experts from both parties supports an active U.S. role, momentum is building for retrenchment. Even President Obama has spoken of concentrating on nation-building at home.

The continued development of new energy sources in the continental United States through the extraction of oil and gas reserves from shale rock through the process of hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" may have security implications. While the world energy market is highly interdependent and shortages in one area affect the global market, it is nonetheless a strategic vulnerability to be dependent on foreign sources of energy. The fact that the United States may soon be self-sufficient with regard to its energy supply may have repercussions such as reinforcing calls for a reduced role in the Middle East and elsewhere. Such scenarios should not be exaggerated, however. Energy extraction must be economically feasible and the U.S. retains important allies in the Middle East (such as Israel) that would be politically difficult to abandon.

Nevertheless, the United States appears poised to redefine its leadership role in the world. As the Syrian civil war and the ongoing tensions with Iran or North Korea illustrate, there is a limited number of viable options open to Washington – particularly after two long military interventions produced few tangible security benefits for the United States. The political, economic, and defense policy trends suggest that a policy of strategic balancing with China will remain the principle focus of the U.S. military, with lesser contingencies receiving attention only when absolutely necessary. NATO alliance members should be prepared not for the disappearance of the United States from the global stage, but rather, in keeping with the structural and political trends, a significant reduction in the U.S. contribution to international security and stability.

SUMMARY CHART: TRENDS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

TRENDS & PROCESSES		SUBSTANCE	OUTLOOK
PROCESSES OF STRATEGIC EVALUATION	POLICY PROCESS	Presidential involvement – Dynamic Greater degree of integration Militarized policy & weak State Dept	Stronger Weaker Steady
	STRATEGIC EVALUATION	Duality – more Big War than COIN Cyber and asymmetric threats Continued Regional Instability	Steady Stronger Stronger
	GRAND STRATEGIC APPROACH	Light Footprint – SOF/UAV/mil-mil Greater strategic risk Great power balancing	Stronger Stronger Stronger
DEFENSE POLICY PLANNING	FORCE STRUCTURE & PLANNING	Hybrid warfare and greater uncertainty No SASO structure, A2/AD &AirSea UAVs Capability vs. capacity dilemma	Steady Stronger Steady Steady
	MILITARY ACQUISITIONS	Modernization: Complex/costly systems Concurrency – delays, reliability? A2/AD and high intensity systems USA – modernized, USN – ok, USAF – less so b/c waiting for F35	Stronger Steady Stronger Steady
	FORCE POSTURE	Shift to Asia Pacific Light Footprint Smaller, flexible basing	Stronger Stronger Steady
	FORCE DOCTRINE	End of COIN A2/AD posture and tactics AirSea Battle	Steady Stronger Stronger
DOMESTIC POLICY	FUNDING SECURITY POLICIES	Less support but still strong Rise of retrenching libertarians Structural budget crunch – guns or butter	Steady Steady Stronger
	DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS OPERATIONS	Retrenching libertarians "Iraq syndrome," distaste for more war	Steady Weaker
	DOMESTIC POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT	Economic disparities, eroding middle class Polarization and Congressional gridlock	Stronger Stronger

NOTES

1. See also Mark Bowden, The Hunt for Geronimo, *Vanity Fair*, November 2012; and Nicholas Schmidle, Getting Bin Laden, *New Yorker*, August 2011.
2. The Obama administration merged the National Security Council Staff with the Homeland Security Council Staff, forming the "National Security Staff".
3. Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, *Global Threats to National Security*, 18 April 2013, attended by the author.
4. The study of bureaucratic politics and decisionmaking has a broad and rich academic body of literature; the seminal work in the field remains Graham Allison's classic 1971 study of White House deliberations during the Kennedy Administration, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*.
5. This point is also made in a column by David Ignatius, In Syria, US Credibility at Stake, *Washington Post*, 28 August 2013.
6. This reflects the formal procedures currently in effect, based on changes made over the past decade.
7. Each of the eleven programs is numbered: 01 Strategic forces; 02 General purpose forces; 03 C3, intelligence and space; 04 Mobility forces; 05 Guard and Reserve forces; 06 Research and development; 07 Central supply and maintenance; 08 Training, medical and other; 09 Administrative and associated activities; 10 Support of other nations; 11 Special operations forces.
8. See for example Stephen Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth, Don't Come Home America: The Case against Retrenchment, International *Security*, 37(3) Winter 2012/13: 7–51; and a reply by Daniel Drezner, Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly as Much as You Think), *International Security* 38(1) Summer 2013: 52–79.

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